A CAPTIVE OF THE ROMAN EAGLES

FELIX DAHN

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By FELIX DAHN

Translated from the German by
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"Aspasia," "Cleopatra," etc.

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and history in Munich and Berlin. In 1862 he was made Professor in the University of Wurzburg, in 1872 in Königsberg, and in 1888 he was called to a chair in the University of Breslau, where, in the intervals of his professional duties, he has devoted himself to his brilliant literary work.

The warm welcome accorded to my translations of the novels of Ebers, whose hold upon the affections of American readers has proved so enduring, inspires the hope that "A Captive of the Roman Eagles" may also receive a cordial recognition from our public.

MARY J. SAFFORD.

Washington, D. C., June 10, 1902.

A CAPTIVE OF THE ROMAN EAGLES

BOOK ONE

THE FREE WOMAN

CHAPTER I.

WHOEVER has been at Friedrichshafen on beautiful Lake Constance, on a clear August day, and watched the sun setting in splendor behind the tops of the beeches of Manzell; whoever has seen the waves of the lake and the snow-capped peaks of the Alps from Sentis to the Allgau Mountains glow in the crimson light, while the notes of the Ave Maria float softly over forest, meadow, and water, will treasure the memory of the peaceful scene throughout his whole life. To this region the story of little Bissula leads us.

But in that period — the year 378 — the whole northern shore of the "Venetus Lacus"

(Lake Constance) looked somewhat desolate, and often by no means peaceful. The lowlands were covered with primeval forests and fens — only here and there a few scattered settlements appeared on patches of parched tilled land.

At that time the lake covered a much more extensive tract of country than now, and a still larger space was occupied by a marshy territory between the water and the meadow, which being for the greater portion of the year a mere swamp afforded at the same time refuge and food to flocks of wild swans, herons, and countless smaller water-fowl.

This region had already been a considerable time in the possession of the Alemanni; but on the southern shore of the lake Rome still maintained her supremacy. This was with the special object of controlling the important roads leading from Gaul by way of Augst (Augusta Rauracorum) to Basle, Windisch (Vindonissa) to Arbon (Arbor Felix), Bregenz (Brigantium), and thence farther eastward, thus preserving the connection between the Western and Eastern portions of the Empire, and facilitating the movements of the troops. The

men were sometimes forced to hasten from the Rhine to the Danube to meet the Goths in the East, and anon from the Danube to the Rhine to contend with the Franks on the lower, or the Alemanni on the upper portion of the stream.

This year also such assistance seemed necessary—this time in the eastern provinces, where the Gothic tribes, especially the Visigoths, fleeing before the Huns, had found refuge on Roman territory, but, driven to desperation by the ill-treatment of the Roman governor, had risen in arms.

True, Valens, the Emperor of the Eastern Empire, hoped to cope successfully with them alone; he would have been reluctant to share the fame of victory with his young nephew and fellow-ruler Gratianus, lord of the Western portion. Yet, nevertheless, he had been compelled to ask the latter to hold himself in readiness to come to his uncle's assistance with his Gallic legions in the territory bordering on the Danube.

Gratianus, however, thought that he could not leave Gaul and the Rhine until he had first punished the Alemanni for their recent incur-

sions across the frontier, and—at least for a while—deterred them from making new inroads. At the same time he desired, in case the summons for help should arrive, to have traversed a portion of the long distance and thus be able to give his uncle aid more speedily. So, toward the end of July, he left his residence, Trier, with the larger portion of his troops, and marched by way of Zabern and Strassburg to the left bank of the Rhine near Augst and Basle. Here and at Windisch he formed two camps and kept the main body of his troops near him, busying himself in the reorganization of the province and eagerly awaiting news from the East.

The expedition against the Alemanni on the northern shore of the lake was entrusted to a small band of troops which, being able to move more swiftly, seemed better suited for the marches through swamp and forest and, moreover, amply sufficient in number; for the attack was directed against only the Linzgau, so called from the little river, which at the present time is still known as the Linz, or more frequently the Ach. This was the home of the Lentian Alemanni, who lived on the

northern and western shores of the lake and, during that very spring, had harried the Roman frontier. The command of the expedition had been entrusted to experienced generals who had chosen their own force of foot and horse, while a large baggage train conveyed the provisions and the remainder of the luggage. In all, there were probably more than three thousand men.

According to the old victorious Roman strategy — whose success was proved by the conquest of nearly half the world known at that day — this small force was to assail the foe from several directions at once, the same as in great campaigns, as if seized by claws, a favorite comparison in Roman military literature. Part of the troops — the cavalry, several squadrons of cataphractarii (mailed riders, who were completely sheathed in armor), cohorts of the Twenty-Second Legion, picked German mercenaries, Batavians (they were considered the best of all the foreign soldiers), and lastly the flower of the Imperial Guard, foot-soldiers, mainly Illyrians and Thracians, were to march northward from Windisch, cross the Rhine, move along the old road to the north, then,

suddenly turning eastward, skirt the western shore of the lake to gain its northern side, thus penetrating the whole Linzgau from the west to the east, halting at an appointed place in the heart of the enemy's country and awaiting the second division. Meanwhile this second body was to march along the great highway bordering the southern shore from Windisch to Arbon, cross the lake in boats, land on the northern shore, and pass through the Linzgau from east to west till they reached the first division.

Thus the escape of the Barbarians, whose tilled lands would all be laid waste, would be cut off both eastward and westward. Those who attempted flight southward in their boats across the lake would be intercepted by the Roman Bodensee* Fleet. Year after year, the last time that very March, the most brilliant reports of its strength and prowess had been sent to Gaul. The remnant of the foe remaining after the assault from two or three directions were to be driven by the united bands as far as possible into the inhospitable northern forests, or forced into the Danube.

The place of meeting appointed for both

*The German name for Lake Constance.

divisions was the lofty hill, half a league north of Friedrichshafen, whence at the present day the church of Berg dominates the lowlands. At that time it was known as the Idisenhang,—the hill of the wood-goddesses. The Roman ships, in crossing directly from Arbon, were obliged to run into the bay of what we know as Friedrichshafen. For the land forces the leaders hoped to find a passable route along the remains of an old military road, which formerly —in Rome's better days—had extended also around the northern shore of the lake. This steep hill, affording an unimpeded view in every direction and dominating the whole neighborhood, was a model of the positions where the Roman eagle was fain to alight for a brief rest during its flights in quest of prey. Here a camp was to be formed, whence the land of the Barbarians would be ravaged by small bodies of troops in every direction, while the strong fortified camp should maintain the connection with the lake, the fleet, and the southern shore, until the whole enterprise was completed and the Romans could return to the Emperor at Windisch.

CHAPTER II.

THE experienced commanders had executed their tasks swiftly, skilfully, and successfully. Arbon, the strongly fortified station of the great military road, had, it is true, been repeatedly attacked, plundered, and set on fire by the Alemanni in swift forays from the lake, but never permanently occupied; they did not like to dwell in cities.

A few years previously Valentinian, Gratianus's warlike father and predecessor, had repaired and strengthened the old walls, increased the garrison, filled the store-houses with provisions, especially grain, and stationed in the harbor a number of ships. These, though neither so numerous nor so stately as those of the Venetian Fleet in the prouder days of Rome, were quite sufficient to prevent the Barbarians from an attack by water, nay, they constantly threatened them with a landing on the northern shore.

The commander of the division intended for

this fleet, the Comes of Britannia, Nannienus, a man skilled in nautical matters and an excellent officer, had reached the harbor fortification with his troops very quickly by the excellent road from Windisch. The other column needed a much longer time for its wearisome march, turning finally eastward before it again reached the shore of the lake.

Caution was the first requisite during this advance through the pathless land of the Barbarians; and no measure of prudence was omitted by the well-trained, circumspect leaders. Natives of the country who were perfectly familiar with the region acted as guides; though the southern shore was inhabited exclusively by Roman colonists, they guarded carefully against treachery from that quarter. Horsemen, lightly armed Celtic archers, the Keltae and Petulantes, and Germans familiar with woodland warfare — the Batavians — formed the van and rear-guards. In the centre were the heavily armed foot-soldiers of the Imperial Guard, protecting the traders and sutlers, luggage, camp equipage, and provisions. They moved along the ruinous old road, as near the shore as the marshy ground permitted, in order to keep in view of the lake,

that they might discover any attempt at an attack by the Barbarians in their boats, and also not lose sight of the opposite shore occupied by the Romans.

The most difficult task was assigned to the left wing which, at the north of the central division and the old road, was to force a passage through forest and morass in a line parallel with that of the main body, and protect it from any flank assault of the foe; for should the latter suddenly burst from an ambush in the impenetrable woods and fall upon the column extended in marching order, the whole body, thus taken by surprise, might be scattered and driven into the marshes and the lake.

But the resistance offered by forest and fen to the progress of the troop seemed destined to remain the sole opposition which the Romans were to encounter; for the latter had not met a single human being since they quitted the southern shore of the lake and the stations along the road there. There were no villages of the Alemanni in this region: the ground was occupied by farms, and the houses (called "Schwaigen") were miles apart. The few lonely dwellings which they passed during a march of

several days had been abandoned. A mysterious silence, boding destruction, seemed to brood over the empty wooden buildings.

Everywhere, just before the time of ripening, the grain — oats, barley, and spelt — had been cut and partly burnt; the latter mode was the quicker, and the grain of the Alemanni should not serve their foe even as fodder for his horses. The cattle had been driven away; the kennels of the faithful farm watch, almost always found at the gates, were also empty; the hay and straw were removed from the barns, which were usually connected with the houses and very often formed part of them.

Slowly, with frequent halts, advancing with difficulty, the Romans assigned to the care of the provisions in charge of the troops or the sutlers and their wives struggled forward for several days, each night carefully establishing a well-fortified camp. From the western end of the lake, where it ran into a stretch of marshy ground densely overgrown by rushes, and meadows with sedges waving in the wind, they marched toward the east. Thus, by a toilsome march, they had reached the foot of the steep hill now crowned by the stately castle of Meersburg.

The long August day, during which frequent showers of rain had fallen, though the sky had not been always clouded, was drawing to a close. Again the sun shone brilliantly through a rift, gilding the whole chain of mountain peaks of the Bernese Alps to the Allgau heights; the Sentis glowed in crimson splendor, solemnly, like a king of the mountain giants who had drawn his radiant mantle around his proud shoulders.

The Roman column halted cautiously at the foot of the steep hill, whose rocky sides fell abruptly to the lake and the valley on the west, while the summit, at that time densely covered with trees and bushes, presented a gloomy, threatening aspect. The oak-leaves and pine-needles were dripping with rain, and wherever the sun did not shine on them, looked dark-green, almost black.

Two officers, whose high rank was betokened by the gold and silver ornaments on their equipments, now flashing brightly in the rays of the setting sun, rode slowly toward the hill. Before them, bound by the right and left arms respectively to the stirrups of two mounted soldiers, walked a guide. A few

pioneers with axes and spades surrounded the leaders, and a little band of Batavian spearmen followed. One of the officers, a stately man about thirty-five, now checked his heavy Spanish barb and bent forward, his clear-cut bronzed features wearing a keenly watchful expression.

"If I have ever known and fought with Germans," he said with a strong Illyrian accent, "they are hiding in the woods on yonder hill-top, which is a natural fortress. Halt, I beg, Prefect Prætor of Gaul. We'll go no farther without reconnoitring. Forward, my brave Batavians. Rignomer, take six men and climb up among the underbrush. But be wary! And you, Brinno, trumpeter, give the signal of warning the instant you discover the foe."

The other officer, a man much his senior, smiled as the order was executed. "You are over-cautious, Saturninus. Always erring on the side of prudence!"

"We cannot be over-cautious against this foe, my noble friend. Had not the Barbarians occupied this fortress erected by the gods of their native land, all courage to offer resistance must have deserted them."

"And it evidently *has* abandoned them. All taste for war was thoroughly extirpated by the departed hero, Valentinian, and our bold young Emperor, his son. My pupil!" he added complacently. "I am quite sure that all danger to the Empire from the Germans is over."

His companion silently shook his head. Just at that moment a captain of the mailed horsemen, a man numbering about five and twenty years, dashed forward from the centre of the Roman column. Tangled locks hung from beneath his helmet, and his features were ignoble in form and disagreeable in expression.

"Must we cross that accursed cliff, Tribune?" he exclaimed, abruptly checking his horse.

"We must," replied the Illyrian quietly. "I have just learned that our left wing has again found the morass in the forest bottomless, and is approaching along this, our only road. And the waves of the lake are dashing at our right."

The young man cast a doubtful glance at the cliff. "H'm," he muttered, "it will cost us many men. But that's no misfortune," he added, "we have more than enough Barba-

rians in our pay; if they fall fighting against other Barbarians, there will simply be fewer of the beasts."

"An abominable remark, nephew Herculanus," replied the Prefect reprovingly.

"If the ascent be resisted," said the Tribune, "it will consume much time, and we have none to lose. We ought to have been on the bank of the Ister long ago to fight the Goths. I am anxious about the Emperor Valens. I have a presentiment of evil."

"You are always boding evil," replied the Prefect, smiling, "but the evil never comes, the good fortune of eternal Rome always conquers. Hark, it is the same now. The trumpeter is giving the signal: 'All safe! Forward!' and the Centurion of the Batavians, who climbed the height first — what is his name? — Rignomer, is beckoning to us to follow. Up, friends! Was I not right, my brave Tribune? The Barbarians will make no defence."

"You are right as usual, uncle!" said Herculanus with a smile intended to be pleasant, but which made quite the opposite impression.

"If you only remain right, Ausonius!" said the Illyrian hesitatingly. "Yet at the moment

it really does appear so. Up, give the signal with the tubas: Forward! We will pitch our camp for the night on that height, and the land of the Alemanni will be defenceless before us."

CHAPTER III.

AS we have seen, the Romans were still ignorant whether the Barbarians were aware of the bands approaching simultaneously from several directions to menace the inhabitants of the forest with destruction. Preparations had been made so secretly that the commanders believed it possible to take the foe completely by surprise. For weeks not a German had been allowed to pass the guards on the very outermost line of Roman territory, which, it is true, had been greatly diminished in the course of the last three or four generations. The right of traffic at the stations on the southern shore had been withdrawn a still longer time, on the pretext of alleged violations of the conditions of such intercourse. Roman traders had not ventured recently within the precincts occupied by neighbors who were justly irritated by such severity.

The sentinels on the frontier reported that nothing unusual could be seen from the watch

towers. The people went about their work in field and forest as usual, tended their numerous flocks, hunted or fished; apparently they thought neither of defence nor flight.

Once, it is true, one of the *speculæ* reported that, late one night, a fire had suddenly blazed upon a mountain peak probably several miles from the lake and, after a short interval, as suddenly vanished. The Alemanni called the towering height, whose summit was visible for many a mile, the Sacred Mountain, the Holy Mountain, and Odin's Mountain, and the name has clung to it tenaciously. True, in later times the "sacred" related to Christian consecration; but at the present day the stately castle on that majestic height bears the title of Heiligenberg. On the spot where Odin's ash-trees then rustled, the breeze now sweeps across the flower-beds of a beautiful garden.

The report was unheeded. Forest fires, even at night, were not unusual among the Germans, who in their labor of clearing the ground often required, in the place of the axe, the aid of the swifter flame. During the next few days also everything remained quiet.

On the morning after that night — it was a

few days prior to the Romans' march across the height of Meersburg, already described — a youth emerged from the dense woods stretching for miles in a northwesterly direction toward the Holy Mountain, a youth whose figure was as straight, tall, and slender as a young pine. The hood of lynx-skin fluttering from his shoulders like a short cloak did not confine his long fair locks, which fell in waves upon his shoulders, waves with which the morning breeze played caressingly, as the youth stopped on the crest of a low grassy hill that afforded a view of the lake.

Resting his right arm upon the oak handle of his spear, he leaned forward, shading his eyes with his left hand from the glare of the sunbeams on the smooth surface of the water, as he gazed intently toward the southern shore. It was an eagle glance, proud, bold, and keen, and the color of the eye was a light golden brown.

The red-tiled roofs of the Roman watch-towers and citadels opposite in Arbon and the other stations (Constantia, etc.) shone brightly in the morning sunlight. The utmost repose pervaded the whole scene. Neither sail nor

row-boat was visible: a huge kite, with an occasional stroke of its broad pinions, was soaring in wide circles above the shallows near the shore.

The young German turned his eyes in the direction of the gently rising ground before him northwest of Friedrichshafen, now occupied by the village of Jettenhausen. At that time the land had been cleared and brought under cultivation. The hill was crowned by a stately wooden structure, surrounded by a fence built breast-high for purposes of defence; a pair of superb antlers adorned the ridge-pole. From the main building itself and a small one adjoining it smoke circled upward through holes in the roof: the inmates were doubtless preparing the morning meal.

The youth made a movement in the direction of the hall, on which his eyes had rested proudly, yet with an expression of almost sorrowful earnestness, then he paused suddenly, saying to himself: "No! I will go first to *her*." He hastened eastward through what was then a tract of marshy woodland — now bearing the name of Seewald — crossing it in the direction of the Tettnang forests. Often he was

forced to leap from rock to rock or from one mossy hillock to another, that he might not sink waist-deep in the morass. But the young German seemed perfectly familiar with the almost invisible path which, sometimes in the form of a ford, sometimes as a bridge, led through the bog and the dense underbrush. Swinging himself with a daring leap, aided by the handle of his spear, across a tolerably wide stream which flowed through moss and sedges to the lake — a startled red grouse flew upward with a shrill cry — he soon saw before him the nearest settlement to his own stately dwelling: for he was the lord of the manor he had left behind. In this region neighbors lived more than a league apart; it was not until succeeding generations that the scattered freeholds along the lake grew into villages.

The little house in the forest — it might almost be called a hut — nestled modestly at the foot of a low hill which sheltered it from the northeast wind. The old roof was overgrown with dark green moss, and the small stable forming part of the dwelling afforded room for only a few head of cattle. Yet everything was neat and well-kept, especially the

little pasture in whose fenced inclosure stood several fruit-trees, while the eye noted with surprise the presence in this wilderness of several ornamental plants belonging to Rome or Southern Gaul: the yew and — carefully tended — some fine roses. Across the top of the ridge-pole was a four-pointed star, clumsily carved from pine-wood, but unmistakable. Its beauty, however, had not been increased by its having been smeared with the red lead used to color the house-mark cut in it — evidently a recent act.

The youth's first glance as he came in sight of the little house was unconsciously directed toward the star on the roof. When he saw the red paint a smile curled the well-cut mouth, which was not yet wholly concealed by the downy beard of early manhood. His second look sought the top of the low hill, where an ancient oak, now steeped in the golden sunshine, was waving its gnarled branches in the morning breeze; long garlands of goat's beard, dangling from the boughs, swayed to and fro. A circular wooden bench surrounded the trunk, and on the southern side a few large stones had been arranged to form a sort of table.

CHAPTER IV.

AN old woman, wrapped in a dark garment, sat almost motionless upon the bench in the warm sunshine. Thin locks of beautiful white hair escaped from beneath the edge of the brown cloak drawn over her head; her hands alone stirred with a slight, regular motion. When the youth's footsteps echoed on the sandy slope of the hillock, she paused in her work and bent forward to listen; then nodding, murmured under her breath: "That's why she slipped away."

"Hail to you, Waldrun!" said the youth, pausing before her. "Don't be frightened—it is I—"

"Adalo, the young noble," interrupted the old woman. "Only the evil-doers fear *you*."

"You recognize me?"

"When the gods blind the eyes, they give sight to the soul. Though your light footstep rarely rings near me now, I know it well. I often hear it as you hurry past our home,

avoiding the house by taking a wide circuit. No one save Bruna, your tame bear, comes to us by daylight from the manor; for you have doubtless forbidden even your fair-haired little brother to visit our house. But brutes are more loyal than human beings: often, very often, Bruna seeks my little maid and Zercho the bondman. When she brings us a wreath of the child's favorite flowers wound around her neck and growling, drags it off to her lap, we know well that the boy Sippilo, not you, sent it. By day you shun us! But—" She bent forward and lowered her voice to a whisper: the youth glanced around in surprise; surely they were still alone—"but by night you often approach stealthily."

Adalo flushed crimson, and sought to divert her thoughts. "Can you spin without seeing?"

"The youngest of the three great Sisters—who was born blind—spins the future of the whole human race. And what I am spinning is as familiar to my fingers as to my thoughts."

"What is it?"

"My shroud. But I do not think that Adalo, son of Adalger, came hither to question Wal-

drun concerning her thoughts of death. Do you seek my son? Suomar has not yet returned from the Council."

"I do not seek him — he sends me. The Council — last night on Odin's Mountain — resolved to destroy all the houses and harvests." The youth's noble, handsome countenance beamed with the fierce menacing joy of battle as he added: "*The Romans* are coming."

"They will not tarry long," said the old woman, calmly going on with her spinning. "I have often seen them dash forward in all the pride of strength, and soon sink feebly back again."

"You women, those unable to bear arms, the slaves, and the cattle are to be received in two fortresses far away from the lake — one on Odin's Mountain in the west, the other among the eastern marshes. We shall form two divisions: one stationed in the east, the other in the west. Your son is assigned to the eastern band; he was sent directly from the council to the swamps. The troop will go through the fords there and strengthen the breastwork of logs around the meadows to prevent the entrance of the Italians."

"Then we must hasten eastward to the morasses. We shall be nearer to him there."

Adalo hesitated. His face again crimsoned and he cast a keen glance at the door of the house ere he began: "That was his first idea — and by the decree of the people the fugitives were thus divided. But — some one else — a friend — counselled him not to hide you in the swamps, but — on the Holy Mountain."

"You belong to the western band — on the mountain."

Adalo made no reply.

"You gave him that counsel, Adalo!"

"I do not deny it; you know that I mean kindly. You will be better concealed on the lofty wooded summit of Odin's Mountain than in the marshes. Life in the fever-breeding swamps is full of discomfort — the disease often attacks the inhabitants — and it is not so safe. The eastern band will not remain in your hiding place: Suomar himself cannot protect you; concealment is your sole defence. But on Odin's Mountain, far up within the stone fortress, the gods of the land themselves will shield you. And the life there in the woodland huts and tents built of green branches will be more com-

fortable and pleasant. And —" he spoke slowly and modestly —"I myself will be there to defend you. Follow me,— to-morrow it may be too late,— follow me at once!"

Just at that moment two acorns fell rattling on the top of the rude stone table and rebounded to the earth. Adalo looked up. "A squirrel?" he asked.

"Yes. A *red* one," added the old woman, nodding. "It often plays its saucy pranks up there. They are sometimes very spiteful."

"Indeed they are," replied Adalo, laughing. "One which I once caught nearly bit through my finger. There!"

Waldrun felt the fore-finger of his outstretched hand, then without releasing it, said: "There is another scar close by. My naughty granddaughter bit you years ago — do you remember? How did it happen?"

"It was at the spring festival. The west wind was blowing furiously, like the very breath of Odin. She ventured alone in your mouldering boat — the old one hollowed from a log — to cross the lake. The others jeered at her — I pleaded. Every effort was vain. Springing into the skiff, she pushed off: if she passed beyond

the rushes into the open water she was lost. I ran after her, waded, swam, and dragged her from the boat, just as it upset. I carried her to the shore, while she writhed and struggled, spitting like an otter, and, by way of thanks, bit my finger."

"And then," replied Waldrun reprovingly, "some spiteful tongue uttered the saying,

"'Sharp is the squirrel's scratch,
Bissula's bite is sharper.'

"The saying ran through the district, nay, all the provinces by the lake. Wherever my granddaughter went, to pick berries in summer, to comb the flax, to glean, to mow, to thresh — everywhere the jeering couplet greeted her. That was not kind. Or wise!" she added in a lower tone.

"Mother Waldrun, you are right: it was not well done, but no harm was meant."

"Yes, yes, Odin placed the song in your reckless lips and gave you the winged words, the biting jest. You cannot help it! Wherever you see a tempting mark, the arrow of a mocking speech whizzes from your mouth."

"But unvenomed, unbarbed. A blunt little shaft like that with which we strike the pretty

red-breast, Donar's favorite, not to harm it, nay, only to capture it unhurt and bear it home to our hearths that it may sing sweetly to us year after year."

"Beware! Everything that has the red hue is passionate, swift to revenge, and slow to forgive."

"Yes," replied the youth laughing. "How runs another verse?

> "'Dost vex little Red Hair?
> I bid thee beware!
> The fair one fear.
> She's false and spits her ire
> Like the fox and the fire.'"

Scarcely was the last line uttered when, high among the topmost boughs of the lofty tree, a strange sound was heard. At the very summit the noise resembled spitting and rattling, while below it was different, like something sliding down the trunk. The first sounds undoubtedly came from a little squirrel, which, startled by some disturbance, chattering and hissing in fear or anger, sprang in a wide curve yet with a sure leap from the topmost bough of the tree to a neighboring oak which stood at a considerable distance.

CHAPTER V.

ADALO'S glance followed the little creature's bound, which really resembled flying.

But meanwhile, from amid the dense foliage in the centre of the tree a figure clad in the dress of a girl slid nimbly down the trunk, and as soon as she reached the ground, smoothed her garments carefully from her knees to her ankles. With her dainty, sparkling beauty, her almost childlike delicacy of form, this apparition looked less like a mortal maiden than a spirit of light.

She wore no cloak. Her white linen robe, with its cherry-red border and girdle of the same hue a hand's breadth wide, left her neck and arms bare; her complexion, wherever any portion of her almost too slenderly moulded figure was visible, gleamed with the dazzling whiteness of ivory; the unusually heavy dark-red eyebrows, which nearly met in the centre but were beautifully arched, frowned threateningly, and her clear blue eyes were now flashing

with wrath. The vision attracted rather by the vivacious charm of expression and the perfect symmetry of her dainty figure than by regular beauty. For it must be confessed, though the charming inquisitive little nose did not actually turn up — by no means — it was really a little too short. And, as it sloped sharply away at the end, the space between it and the upper lip became too long, thereby giving the oval face when in repose an expression half of alert surprise, half of mischievous wilfulness.

Everything about this dainty dragon-fly was so delicate that the young girl might easily have been taken for a child, had not her rounded bust revealed her womanhood. Wonderfully charming was the little mouth, whose lips were so full that they seemed to pout mirthfully, while their hue rivalled the red border of her robe. A dimple in the chin and a slight tendency to a double chin lent the face that innocent sweetness without which woman's beauty fails to attract.

The most remarkable thing about this elfin vision was her hair — hair whose bright red hue was the very tint of flame — which rippled around her brow and temples in a thousand wilful little ringlets as if each individual one

curled separately. They seemed to frame the face protectingly, as thorns cluster about a rose-bud. The rest of her locks, after the Suabian fashion, were combed upward toward the crown, knotted there, and then flowed in magnificent tawny waves, somewhat darker in tint, over her dazzlingly white neck far below her waist.

The expression of saucy defiance, inquisitive surprise, nay even superiority, enhanced by this arrangement of the hair, was still further heightened by the little creature's habit of raising her heavy eyebrows as if in mingled astonishment and reproof. In the charm of the contradiction lay a temptation to smile which this fragile elf, with her pert little nose and sparkling blue eyes, seemed to discover — and if necessary instantly resent.

An extremely strong will, a hot, ungovernable temper, and the sweetness of a half unfolded bud, were contrasts which provoked a smile — nay, almost irresistibly awakened a desire to try what the impetuous little thing would do if her swift wrath were aroused. But when she raised her eyes with a more gentle expression, they were so bewitchingly beautiful, so pure, so tender, so soulful, that enthusiastic

admiration made the spectator forget the inclination to tease her.

True, at this moment the elf looked by no means angelic, but thoroughly evil, as, darting only one swift glance of furious rage at the tall young noble, she seized the old woman violently by the shoulder and in a low voice — stifled by suppressed fury — cried: "Grandmother! — Away! — To the marshes! Zercho the bondman must guide us. Away!"

"Gently, child, gently! Did not you hear? It will be safer on the mountain."

"Safer perhaps for us; but not for those whom we — no, whom *I* should then be near. Go," she cried furiously to the youth, "save yourself, I advise you, from the red-hair. 'False and spitting her ire like the fox and the fire.' Was that the way it ran, you witty fellow? As soon as the daughter of our neighbor Ero, giggling with spiteful mirth, told me your last jibe against me, I climbed the hay-ladder to the ridge-pole of our house and painted our white star up there red: painted it very thick and bright, so that you could see it from the edge of the forest and keep far away from the evil color. Very far — do you hear?"

CHAPTER VI.

ADALO had now recovered from his astonishment.

"I knew," he said, smiling, "that the elves of light dwell above our heads; but I was not aware that they had nests among the boughs of the oaks."

"And why not? If you reproach me with being an elf of light."

"It is no reproach, I should think. What says the elf-song? 'Fairest fair are not the ases, but the elves.'"

"'Sharp is the bite of the squirrel, but Bissula's is sharper still.' You yourself classed me with the biting animals, so do not wonder that I fled to my red, snarling, biting sisters when I heard in the distance the haughty footfall of the hated Adalo. I detected your approach even sooner than the long-practised ear of my blind grandmother. Hate is quick to hear."

"Do you hate me?" asked the youth. His voice sounded low and sad.

"Forgive her, Adalo! She is but a child."

"No, grandmother, I am a child no longer; I shall see my eighteenth winter when the next snow falls. The child tried to defend herself against superior strength. She was too weak; but now something within me struggles against your arrogance—I know not what it is; it glows here in my breast, and believe me, this thing within is stronger than my hands once were: you cannot conquer."

"I do not wish to conquer; I seek to protect you and your grandmother."

"The head of our clan will protect us—Suomar, her son, my uncle and guardian."

"Suomar thought that you would be safer on Odin's Mountain."

"Because my good uncle did not suspect that you were only trying to win fresh renown by new couplets. Something like this:

> 'Bitterly bites Bissula! But back
> Repentant she ran, in fear of the Romans;
> To Adalo, the Adeling!'

You hear—I too can make verses."

"Evil words," said Waldrun reprovingly, "which were not given to you by Odin the Wise, but by Loki! Why do you scorn the

protection your neighbor offers? You grew up together like brother and sister, constant playfellows on the shore and the lake."

"Until the neighbor discovered that he was the rich, strong young noble, skilled in song; the 'handsome' Adalo — as all the silly girls whisper. He handsome? He is hideous. His name is forever ringing in one's ears throughout the whole region in every dwelling along the lake. Who is the boldest hero in the Roman war? The stoutest swimmer, the most successful hunter? The victor in wrestling, hurling stones, casting the spear? Who leaps highest in the sword dance? To whom do even the gray-beards listen in the Council? At whom do the maidens peep at the sun-festival? Adalo! Adalo! Adalo! — The arrogant fellow! It is unbearable."

The angry maiden pressed both little clenched hands over her eyes to shut out the sight of the foe she so fervently hated.

"Would arrogance bring me here with this entreaty?"

"Ay; sheer arrogance! When, during the spinning in the winter and the hay-making in

the autumn, the girls talked about you, I said little; I only listened. It was rumored that Jetto, the rich lord of the manor, was beginning — he took the first step — to treat with Adalo concerning a marriage with his daughter, Jettaberga. Jettaberga is the handsomest girl in the lake region —"

"That is not true," said Adalo earnestly.

"Her kinsmen, next to your own family, have the largest number of spears and of cattle, are the richest in shields and in lands."

"That is true," he answered, nodding assent. "But Adalo refused the offer as soon as it was sufficiently well known in the neighborhood that Jetto himself had proposed to give him his daughter because both clans would have profited by the alliance —"

"Especially Jetto!" interrupted Waldrun. "And because Jettaberga thought the young nobleman was handsomer than any other man."

"That is probably *not* true!" remarked the latter, smiling pleasantly.

"Yes, it is true!" exclaimed Bissula vehemently. "Don't deny it. She told me so."

"I wish to hear nothing about it, Bissula — chatterer!" said the grandmother reproachfully.

The girl bit her lips.

"Pshaw, he knew it; or he believed he knew it, as he believes it of all girls. And so it must seem to him and his companions that Bissula also (who, it is true, is neither rich nor beautiful — only Bissula, who is defiant and tameless), that I, too, instead of going to the marshes would rather flee to the Holy Mountain — to Adalo! But" — and now her eyes blazed with an almost menacing light — "you shall never boast of *that!*"

"But if I command?" warned the old woman.

"Then I'll run off to the swamps alone. Forgive me, dear, dear grandmother; but Suomar is my guardian, not you. Did he command? Speak!"

"He only advised," replied Adalo reluctantly.

"Then I am free! Advice may be followed or not. But know this: If you had lied —"

Adalo's face blanched.

"Insolent girl!" said the grandmother reprovingly.

"Oh, I know — he never lies; but it is not from truthfulness, but pride. If you had pre-

tended that my guardian had given a command — I would rather have leaped into the deepest part of the lake than have gone with you."

"What foolish defiance! He speaks only from anxiety."

"He speaks from arrogance. The vain fellow weaves a wreath composed of every flower to deck his curly head: Bissula, the red heather-blossom, must not be wanting."

"The red heather-blossom alone must adorn my life," said the youth earnestly.

Bissula started: every tinge of color faded from her face, and trembling violently she clasped her grandmother's arm for support.

The latter, however, with a keenly intent expression, turned her head toward Adalo. "What words were those you dared to utter?"

"Earnest ones. I am under no man's authority. I am old enough to lead a wife to my home, strong enough to protect her. Well then, Bissula, playmate of my childhood, come with me! I will give whatever Suomar demands. I love you better than any one else can do. Come with me to the Holy Mountain, that I may protect you there — my betrothed bride!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE young girl clung still closer to Waldrun, but the latter started up in alarm and hastily pressed her hand upon Bissula's heart.

"How it throbs!" she murmured. Then, raising her left hand, as if to keep the youth back, her right drew the folds of her ample cloak over the blushing girl's sweet face. "Go," she said warningly. "Suspicion seizes me also. It is ignoble for you to dare utter the words of wooing to two defenceless women, confusing the girl, and inspiring vain, idle thoughts. That is not the honorable custom of our people. If your suit was serious you ought first to have spoken to Suomar, the guardian: he gives my granddaughter's hand, not she herself. Whoever means marriage deals with the guardian; whoever seeks mere amusement and dallying coaxes the girl. Go! I doubt you!"

Adalo laid his hand upon his breast with a gesture of protest, but ere he could speak Bissula glided from beneath the shelter of her

grandmother's cloak. Her cheeks were glowing; her red locks fairly bristled; it seemed as if one could almost hear them crackle; her angry eyes blazed, and springing forward, she pushed the youth with both hands, but had no power to stir the tall figure.

"Yes, go!" she cried. "I do *not* doubt. Even Waldrun, who always speaks in your behalf, distrusts you, and she cannot see your arrogant face, the victorious smile on your proud lips, the light in your sparkling eyes! There — see how the feigned expression of good-will vanishes from your features; how resentfully you rear your head! Ay, that is the noble, the swift, strong, handsome man, who believes that the god of wishes must grant every whim, every caprice of his favorite. *You* mate with a poor girl! *you* lead red-haired Bissula to your home! Besides, I am called Bissula only by my friends; to strangers my name is Albfledis. Waldrun is right: the blind woman has seen. If you were in earnest you would have gone to the guardian."

She drew back and seized her grandmother's arm. "Come! let us return to the house."

But Adalo, his tall figure drawn up to its full height, barred their way. Grief and anger were

contending for the mastery in the expression of his handsome face.

"I was in earnest, the deepest earnest. Freya knows it. Soon Frigga will know also. I did not speak to Suomar, because I did not wish, like most men, to obtain the girl solely by her guardian's command; I desired not only her hand and her person, but her heart, her love. I was sure of Suomar."

"Do you hear his arrogance, grandmother?"

"It is not arrogance. What can your uncle bring against me? Nothing! And we have always been friendly neighbors. He would not have refused me; but I did not want you as a gift from another, you defiant creature. I wanted the playmate of my childhood to give herself to me. Yes, I confess I hoped that she retained from those childish days a little — just a little affection."

"Presumptuous fellow!"

"And now the hour and the danger loosed my tongue. The Romans are approaching. Who knows what they may bring us? But you have repulsed me with undeserved suspicion, disdained my loyal aid. True," — here his brow contracted with mingled grief

and anger,—"perhaps the foe will not injure *you*."

"What do you mean?" asked Waldrun. Her tone expressed dread of some fresh cause for contention between the two young people. Bissula, without speaking, darted a flashing glance at him.

"For years," Adalo went on with suppressed indignation, "you have had friends among these hated enemies—at least one friend. Perhaps he will return hither with the cohorts now threatening us — the wise, eloquent, and wealthy Senator! Of course a German noble, a 'Barbarian,' cannot vie with him in gifts of jewels, rare fruit, and foreign flowers. That I belong to your own people and he to our mortal foes—what care you? You need, nay perchance you desire, neither marsh nor mountain as a defence against your—friend!"

"Silence, Adalo! She was then only thirteen. The noble Roman might be her father, nay, almost her grandfather."

"But he was so clever! He understood how to choose his words so skilfully that usually I could not comprehend them at all. And Alb-

fledis was so fond of listening to the language of the foe!"

"At least," the girl hastily retorted, "Ausonius never used the language of insolent mockery to the child. And since you have provoked me to it, I tell you: yes, if the noble, kindly Roman should ever come again and wish, as he did then, to take me with him as his child to his beautiful country, his splendid pillared mansion,—listen,—I would rather go with him, his daughter, than listen to you and your contemptuous suit."

"Stay, Albfledis," said the youth, drawing himself up proudly. "Enough! My suit? It is ended forever. Never will I repeat it—I swear by this spear. You have scorned me —have openly preferred the Roman. Hear my vow, in the presence of your ancestress and the all-seeing sun: Never again will Adalo woo you. Though the ardent longing of my heart should consume me, I will die ere I approach you again with words of entreaty."

"Alas!" wailed the blind woman, "alas for my dearest wish! Is it never to be fulfilled?"

"If it should be, Mother Waldrun, Albfledis must first come to me in my hall, and say:

'Adalo, here I am! Take me for your wife!'"

"Oh, what shameless insolence!" cried Bissula, frantic with grief and rage. Seizing one of the blocks of stone which formed the rude table before the oak, she tried to hurl it at the hated man. Her little hands tore at the jagged rock without avail, till the fingers bled, but the heavy block remained unmoved, and bursting into tears of helpless rage, she flung herself upon the ground.

The old woman bent over her, listening anxiously to her sobs, but Adalo had neither seen nor heard aught of these things. Even as he uttered the last words, he turned his back upon the women, his face dark with pride and anger, and throwing his spear over his shoulder, leaped down the slope so swiftly that his yellow locks floated wildly around his handsome head.

CHAPTER VIII.

DAYS had passed since the incident related in the last chapter. The Romans had entered the country without encountering the slightest resistance. After encamping on the summit of Meersburg and resting during the following day, they had set forth again and, turning somewhat inland from the lake and its swampy shores, reached the Idisenhang.

Finding this commanding position undefended, they had formed a permanent camp here at the spot agreed upon with the troops which had embarked on the fleet. As soon as this seemed sufficiently fortified to be defended by a small garrison left behind, and their comrades in Arbon had the fleet ready, the latter were to cross, land, and begin the pursuit of the invisible Barbarians.

But scarcely had Nannienus seen from Arbon on the opposite shore that the column sent by land had reached the spot appointed and established a camp, when he despatched by

a swift fisher-boat tidings which threatened to defer the progress of the enterprise for an indefinite time. As soon as the experienced commander reached the Roman post he discovered that the equipment of the necessary vessels would require far more time than had been expected.

The reports of the magistrates and officers to the distant Emperor, which represented a considerable portion of the old Roman fleet as still in existence and, moreover, strengthened by newly built ships, proved false and shamefully exaggerated: these unprincipled men, corrupt, like nearly all the officials in the Empire, had concealed their numerous defeats in which the Barbarians had gradually destroyed these ships; they had then appropriated the money furnished to build new ones, and reported them completed.

This was the discovery made by the Comes of Britannia, who announced with fierce indignation — he had sent the treacherous quaestors and nauarchs in chains to the Emperor at Vindonissa — that though he had ordered work to be carried on in the little dockyard night and day, the intended landing must be deferred to

a considerably later period. Energetic Saturninus was incensed by this enforced idleness: but he could do nothing save vituperate the corruption of the magistracy, the Empire, the whole age, and — wait.

The richly decorated tent intended for the Prefect of Gaul was pitched upon the very summit of the height which is now occupied by the cemetery of the village of Berg. Soft rugs, piled one above another, covered the ground; a couch was placed against the back of the leather tent, and beside it stood a table adorned with costly drinking-vessels. An old freedman, a slave, and the cup-bearer were engaged in giving the last touches. There were places for three on the horseshoe-shaped couch, and a row of goblets stood on the table; for, though the cœna had been served in the Tribune's tent, the Prefect had invited him and his nephew to take some choice wine after the meal in the Praetorian one.

While the servants were busied in preparing the table, the loose leather at the poles in the rear of the tent was repeatedly raised noiselessly and then dropped again. No one observed it. Two of the men now went out, but the cup-

bearer still lingered to wipe again and again the inside of a magnificent silver goblet, which, supported by three graceful female figures, bore the inscription: "The graces to their favorite, Ausonius."

"Not ready yet, Davus?" the old freedman had asked in a tone of vexation, as he turned away.

"No, Prosper. You know our master will drink only from this cup, the Emperor's gift, and he is so particular about it."

The slave was scarcely alone when the leather flap of the tent was again raised, a watchful face was thrust cautiously in. "Alone at last!" a voice whispered.

"I was waiting for you, my lord."

"Well? To-day? At the nocturnal carouse?"

"No. I dare not attempt it yet. Your uncle is as well as he was at home in Burdigala. Let him first sicken under this Barbarian sky, the unwonted fatigues of camp life in the rain and swamps; then it will be easier. But now — in perfect health? No, no! Have patience. Wait a little longer."

"I cannot. My creditors, the usurers, are hounding me to the death; have followed me

here to the camp. And this region, this neighborhood, as you know, is more perilous to me than any other spot in the whole world. So hasten!"

"As soon as he begins to ail a little I'll do it at once. But I must confess—"

"What?"

"The vial of poison you gave me, I—"

"Lost? You blockhead!"

"No, it is broken. During the steep ascent of the mountain recently I slipped, struck my breast against a boulder, and crushed the little bottle, whose contents all poured out."

"Alas, then where else—"

"Have no fear, my lord. I've seen hemlock enough growing in these marshy meadows to poison our whole army. I have already begun to gather and dry it. Do you the same, and as soon—"

Loud voices and the clank of weapons were heard; the face vanished, and the slave passed through the doorway of the tent into the open air.

CHAPTER IX.

DIRECTLY after, Ausonius and Saturninus entered the Praefectorian tent from the *Via Principalis*, while Herculanus, coming from the rear, passed in with them. The host shared his seat on the couch with his two guests.

He was a man of fifty-two, but his stately figure showed few signs of approaching age, and his noble face lacked none of the characteristics of the patrician Roman in the modelling of the forehead, nose, and finely arched brows.

But the mouth had smiled so often — probably far too often in self complacency — that it had forgotten how to close with firm decision; it was much too weak for a man. And the light-brown eyes, so pleasant and kindly, so content with everything and everybody — and not least with Ausonius — betrayed more plainly than any other feature the approach of age; their glance had lost the fire of youth. They seemed weary, not of life but of reading; for

Ausonius had been professor, rhetorician, tutor of princes, and poet. In those days that meant a man who read an immense amount and, in default of elevating thoughts of his own, extracted with the industry of a bee the ideas of the writers of four centuries, tore them asunder, and put them together again in such tiny fragments that his readers and himself believed them to be new ones of his own and would have found it very difficult to separate the mosaic into its borrowed portions. Passions had never furrowed this smooth face: the lines around the eyes were not graven by pain, but by the passage of the years.

This kindly natured man, who himself saw everything on its best side, thought the whole world most admirably arranged. He believed seriously that all men who had not committed great crimes, and therefore deserved punishment, fared just as well as the very, very wealthy, benevolent, and much praised Decimus Magnus Ausonius of Burdigala (Bordeaux), the delightful city of villas; that they fared as well as Ausonius, who was petted by all who surrounded him, and who in the opinion of his contemporaries — and especially

his own — was the greatest poet of his age. Even had this been true, it certainly would not have meant much.

This really amiable, kindly man, whose only fault was a little undue self-satisfaction, was now playing the part which best suited him, — far better than that of poet or statesman, — the part of the host who, comfortable himself, desires to make all his guests equally so. His pleasant, cheery, friendly kindness of heart, which would fain see everybody happy, though of course without too much self-sacrifice, found in this *rôle* its fullest expression.

"There! now go, slaves." He waved his hand to those who had again entered. "Look after yourselves — as we are doing. Go, too, my faithful Prosper: take for yourself — and give to the others — the better wine from Rhodanus; you know it. I saw how hard it was to drag the skins up the steep hill. Go: we will serve ourselves." He stretched himself comfortably on the lectus, thrusting under his head a soft downy pillow filled with the feathers of German geese. "Give yonder amethyst goblet to the Tribune, my dear nephew, for our Illyrian Hercules must drink deeply! No,

Saturninus, don't take the mixing vessel! The first cup — unmixed. To the genius of the Emperor Gratianus!"

"It's lucky that the Emperor himself doesn't hear you," cried the Tribune, laughing, as he put down the empty goblet. "I am neither Christian nor pagan, only a soldier, and nobody asks about my faith. But you! Gratianus's teacher! The Emperor is zealous in the true religion. And you drink to his genius, as though we were living in the reign of Diocletian! Are you a pagan, Prefect of Gaul?"

Ausonius glanced around to see that no slave was within hearing. Then he smiled. "If I were a pagan, that is, if I had not been baptized, I certainly should not be Prefect of Gaul. The dignity is probably worth a few drops of water. They did not penetrate my skin. How could a poet forget the old gods?"

"Yes, yes, if the learned mythological allusions should be effaced from your verses, the brightest of the borrowed foreign feathers would be plucked from Ausonius's raven."

"Tribune!" cried the nephew angrily, — he shouted much louder than was necessary,—"you are speaking of the greatest Roman writer!"

"No, no," said the man thus lauded, very seriously, "there are probably two or three greater ones."

"Forgive me, Ausonius," said Saturninus. "I understand battles, not verses. Probably it is my own fault that yours don't suit me."

"You know too few of them," replied Herculanus reprovingly.

"I'm not of your opinion!" retorted the Illyrian, laughing. "I've never had much time for reading. But I sometimes ride beside your uncle through the olive woods of Aquitania, the vineyards of the Mosella, or the marshy forests of the Alemanni: he has an inexhaustible memory and can repeat his verses for miles."

"Yes," the poet assented complacently, "my memory must supply the place of imagination."

"Wouldn't it be better if you had imagination, and your readers took pleasure in remembering what it created?" asked the soldier.

"My uncle can repeat the whole of Virgil."

"Yes, that is evident—in his verses! The reader often doesn't know where Virgil and Ovid end and Ausonius begins. But Ausonius prefers to recite his own poetry."

The latter nodded pleasantly.

"That's the best thing about you, Prefect; though a little vain, like all verse-writers, your heart is in the right place: a warm, kind heart which never takes offence at a friend's jest."

"I should be both stupid and contemptible if I did that."

"As a reward I'll tell you now that I owe an exquisite night to one of your poems — or a portion of it."

The poet, much pleased, raised himself on the lectus: "What poem?"

"Your 'Mosella.'"

"Yes, yes," replied Ausonius smiling, "I like it very much, too."

"It is divine!" Herculanus protested.

"I'm no theologian," said Saturninus, laughing, "to understand divine things. But the most beautiful part of the poem is the description of the various kinds of fish in the river."

"Yes, yes," observed the author, smiling as he slowly sipped his wine, "verses eighty-two to one hundred and forty-nine: they are very pretty, especially the euphony."

"Oh, never mind the euphony. I read it in the evening, and fell asleep."

"Barbarian!" exclaimed the poet.

"But in my dreams I saw before me the most delicious fish; the salm—"

"'Thee, too, I praise, O salmon, with thy roseate flesh!'"

Ausonius quoted.

"The trout."

"'Then the trout, its back besprinkled with tiny crimson stars.'

"That's what I call a fine line."

"The grayling."

"'And the swift grayling, escaping from the eye with rapid leaps!'"

"Yes, but not as you describe them, alive in the Mosella—there is nothing I enjoy eating more than a fine fish! No, I saw them before me on silver dishes, baked, broiled, and in dainty stews; and in my dream I tasted them all. When I woke, I licked my lips and blessed Ausonius: no poet has ever given me so much pleasure."

He laughed and drained his goblet.

CHAPTER X.

"I AM generous," replied Ausonius. "It pleases me to discover in this way a favorite dish of my usually Spartan friend. I will avenge myself by placing before you, if possible, the delicious fish this lake contains; for in its green depths are balche and trout of the most delicate flavor. They are even better than those of the Mosella: I could surely have supplied you with them if the Barbarians had not all fled from the shore before our troops. When, five years ago, I spent several months on the opposite side in Arbor Felix, to investigate the condition of the frontiers, what magnificent fish I had!" Then, as if lost in reverie, he sighed: "Ah, those were happy days! My dear wife, my gentle Sabina, was living."

"Hail to thy memory, Attusia Lucana Sabina!" said the nephew.

"And my dear children! Then my beautiful, spacious house in the city, and the charming villa outside the Garumna gate were

not empty and desolate. How gaily the songs of the young girls echoed through the country during the season when the vine blossoms poured forth their fragrance! Then I still saw around me the beloved faces of my kindred, did not stand alone, poor with all my wealth, as now—"

"Uncle!" interrupted Herculanus, trying to assume a tone of most tender reproach, in which, however, he was not entirely successful. "Stand alone? Have you not me, who love you so tenderly?"

The Tribune gazed coldly at the over-zealous nephew.

But Ausonius replied kindly: "Certainly, my dear fellow, you are left to me, but you alone out of the whole circle of my family swept away in a single year by the pestilence: my Sabina, my three children, my two sisters and two sweet young nieces. Can you alone fill the places of all? I often feel so lonely. And you are a man. My gentle wife, my daughters, my sisters, my nieces, how I miss them! I confess it: I need the melody of women's voices, their graceful movements around me. I miss something!"

The young Roman, excited, hastily seized the goblet. The Tribune looked him keenly in the face and, without averting his eyes from the nephew, suddenly said to the uncle in a very loud tone: "You must marry again!" Then the Illyrian turned away from Herculanus: he seemed to have seen enough.

"Yes," said Ausonius slowly, almost solemnly, "I have often thought of it. It is a serious, a very serious matter — at my age."

"At any age," said Saturninus. "Years will not stand in your way. You are perhaps fifty?"

"Fifty-two," sighed the Prefect. "And my hair is gray!"

"Not very yet! Besides, mine is too. In my case from the weight of the helmet. And it is becoming. You are a —"

"Handsome old man, you are going to say," replied Ausonius smiling. "That is not exactly what pleases maidens."

"Well, you need not choose a girl of sixteen."

"But not one much older!" said the poet quickly. "No, my friend! I want youth and charm near me."

"That you may have too," said the Illyrian. "You can select from your whole province, nay,

the whole Empire. You, the highest official in Gaul, the Emperor's tutor and favorite, the celebrated poet and—"

"And the richest match in the whole West," interrupted the nephew sharply. Hitherto he had remained persistently silent, his eyes cast down and the expression of his mouth covered by his hand. "The richest graybeard on this side of the Alps!" he added.

"Yes, that is it," said Ausonius bitterly. "Herculanus only says openly and frankly what has secretly tortured me so much all these years, nay, what has alone deterred me. You know, my friend,—or rather, you blunt Tribune of the camp, you do not know,—for what reasons parents in our large cities marry their daughters, nay, how these girls themselves, almost before they have laid aside their dolls, instantly look out for 'a good catch'! In sooth, neither Eros nor Anteros, but Hermes and Plutus unite couples now."

"Yes, they marry only for money!" cried Herculanus wrathfully. "I am poor; the girls all shun me—"

The Tribune was about to answer, but only laughed and drank his wine.

"Although I am nearly thirty years younger than my uncle! Fathers, mothers, guardians, nay, even the forward girls themselves, all cajole him, till I can scarcely warn and guard enough."

"That's the way the bee-keeper guards the honey from the mice," growled the Illyrian under his breath.

"My nephew is perfectly right. A friend of mine, Erminiscius, a rich merchant who deals in gems, fifty years old, married a girl of twenty. A week after, she disappeared with all his antique jewels and — his youngest freedman. Another, Euronius, a large owner of vineyards, somewhat older, married a young widow of twenty-five; that is — he was married by her; for she did not rest until she had him. Even before the wedding he was obliged to make his will; she dictated it to him word for word. He died at the next kalends — violent colic. I did not like it at all; I hate colic! And so many wild cherries grew close by his garden! You ought to see how much this double widow enjoys life now. She once paid me a visit — she is very beautiful and was bewitchingly amiable to me; but I thought of the dead Euronius's

colic, and escaped unwedded. I don't imagine in all cases an elopement or a wild-cherry cake; every one is neither a Helena nor a Locusta. Suspicion is not usually one of my faults."

"Rather the contrary," observed Saturninus.

"But, I confess it, my gray hairs make me distrustful. I should be so unhappy — Apollo's richest laurels would not heal the wound — if I were forced to believe that I had been married only for the sake of my wealth. I do not deserve it."

"No indeed, you do not," cried the Tribune, pressing his hand warmly. "Your heart is tender, kind, and frank. Whoever feigned love for the sake of your money would be contemptible. And I hope that you may yet see a band of children playing around your knees in the beautiful villa gardens on the flowery shores of your beloved Garumna."

Ausonius smiled. The picture seemed to please him. Then his eye met the glance of his nephew, who seemed to be gazing into the distance less complacently. "Don't be uneasy, Herculanus," he said. "Even if it should be so, my will would not forget you. And your creditors," he added, smiling compassionately.

"Will! What an ill-omened word! Far be it," cried the young Roman.

"Well, people don't die from making wills, or I should have left the living long ago. A Roman citizen sets his house in order for every emergency, death included. So, though Herculanus according to the law would now be my sole heir, I made my will before the magistrate in Burdigala before joining the army, formally naming him my heir: a few little legacies and the liberation of some faithful slaves still remain. To you, Saturninus," he added, laughing, "I shall bequeath after my return, in a codicil, a valuable memento of this evening."

"Well?"

"A copy of the 'Mosella'; but the verses about the fish are to be cut out by way of punishment."

He quaffed his wine, pleased with his own jest.

CHAPTER XI.

"YOU must and will survive me, my noble friend! The Tribune will soon lie where he belongs: on his shield. But you still belong to Burdigala, in your tasteful house filled with rare works of art (what hospitality I enjoyed there the last time I was wounded!), or to Rome, in the Senate; not here, in the marshy forests of these Alemanni. Why (you always liked to accompany the Emperor to Vindonissa)—why did you, a man of peace and of leisure, join this military campaign? It has no attraction for you! What have you to obtain on the Barbarian shores of this lake?"

"I? I am seeking for something here," replied Ausonius, after some little hesitation.

"Laurels of Mars to add to those of Apollo?"

"Not at all; only—a memory!"

Herculanus cast a sharp glance full of meaning at his uncle.

"Or, if you prefer it, a dream, the fulfilment of a dream. I believe in dreams."

"Of course," said the Tribune, smiling, "like all poets! I care more for waking thoughts."

"When I reached the army over yonder in Vindonissa, a lovely charming memory of a child rose vividly before me; a child equally bewitching in mind and person, whom I knew and loved here several years ago."

"A boy?"

"No, a girl."

"Ho, ho, pedagogue of the Emperor!" cried the Tribune, laughing.

Herculanus did not enter into the jest; he was silently watching Ausonius's every look.

"Oh, calm yourself! Bissula is a girl about twelve years old — that is — she was in those days. She and a Sarmatian boy brought to Arbor every week the fish her uncle had caught on the northern shore of the lake. And how delightfully she talked! Even her Barbarian Latin sounded sweetly from her cherry-red lips. We became the best of friends. I gave her — she would accept neither money nor costly jewels — trifling articles, especially seeds of fine Gallic fruit and flowers from Garumna for her little garden. She told me strange stories of the gods and fauns in the woods, the nymphs in

the lakes and springs here in the country,—but she gave them different names,—and the mountain giants opposite, whose white heads glittered in the sunset light. And I—I—"

"You read the 'Mosella' to her, of course!" laughed Saturninus.

"Certainly. And the little Barbarian girl showed a better appreciation of it than the great Roman general. It was not the fish that pleased *her* best—"

"I can easily believe it: she had better ones herself, you said just now."

"But the descriptions of the vineyards and villas along the river. And when I told her that in my home on the Garumna were far, far handsomer and richer houses, full of marble, gold, bronze, and ivory, adorned with brightly painted walls and mosaics; that I myself owned the most beautiful palaces and magnificent gardens full of leaping water, foreign stags and deer, and birds with sweet songs or brilliant plumage; when I spoke of the deep blue of the sky and the golden light of the sun in the glorious land of Aquitania where almost perpetual summer reigned, she could not hear enough in prose and verse of the splendor of

our country and the magnificence and art of our life. Once she clapped her little hands in surprise and delight, exclaiming: 'Oh, father, I should like to see that too. Just one day!' But I had grown so fond of the gay, sweet child that, with a thrill of joy at the thought, I answered: 'Come, my little daughter, not for a day — forever. If your guardian will consent, I will adopt you as my child and take you to Burdigala. How gladly my wife will welcome you! My daughters will treat you as a dear sister. You shall become a Roman maiden!'

"But, like a frightened deer, she sprang from my lap, ran off, leaped into her boat, rowed swiftly across the lake, and did not return for many days. I was full of anxiety lest I had driven her away forever. At last — it was a time of complete peace — I had myself rowed across the lake to its northern shore and guided to her hut in the forest. But she had scarcely caught sight of me when, with a loud cry of terror, she climbed into a huge oak as nimbly as a woodpecker and hid herself among the branches. She would not come down again until I had solemnly promised, in the presence of her uncle and her grandmother, not to take

her away and never even to say a word about it: 'For,' she said, with tears in her eyes, 'in that hot country I should die of homesickness for my own family, the neighbors, nay, even for the mountain, the meadow, and lake, like the forest flowers transplanted from the marshy soil into dry sand.'"

"A sensible child," remarked the Tribune thoughtfully, stroking his beautiful brown beard. "So she is pretty?"

"I think so!" cried Herculanus: the voice sounded almost savage.

"Why, nephew, you have never seen her."

"But you have described her to us often enough! I could paint her, with her bright red locks."

"And her name is Bissula?" Saturninus added.

"Yes, 'the little one,'" replied Ausonius, "for she is very slender and delicate of limb. I then saw her regularly again, but kept my promise not to ask her to go with me. When I bade her farewell, she wept with a child's loving tears. 'With you,' she said 'I part from a warm, bright, beautiful world, into which, as it were, I peeped, standing on tiptoe, over a curtain.'

"Recently, on reaching Vindonissa — during my journey through the country I had thought much of the charming child — I saw her before me in a dream the first night, encircled by a poisonous serpent. Her eyes were raised to mine, imploring help. I woke with a cry, and my heart grew heavy at the thought of what might befall the lovely girl — for she must have become beautiful — if our cohorts bring all the horrors of war into the forests along the shore of the lake. And I confess, it was principally to see that child again — perhaps to protect her until the war should be over — that I entreated the Emperor to permit me to join this expedition."

CHAPTER XII.

"BUT I suppose you did not think your uncle's life would be sufficiently safe under my protection, Herculanus, since you were so eager to join us?" asked the Tribune.

Before the nephew could answer, Ausonius interrupted: "But — thank the gods — our campaign will be bloodless: the Barbarians have abandoned the country. Where can they have gone? What have you learned through your spies of the movements of the enemy?"

"Nothing. That is the mysterious part of it. It seems as though the earth had swallowed them. They are said to have numerous subterranean passages and cellars, in which they conceal their provisions and themselves in times of danger. We found it very difficult to obtain spies among our colonists on the southern shore. They know very well that we Romans come and go; the Alemanni remain in the country, and they fear their vengeance. And deserters can no longer be had. In former wars they were

often mentioned. But the fact that there are no renegades shows that self-reliance is increasing and the dread or hope of Rome is declining. I could get only two volunteers — for a large sum of money — to venture upon a reconnoitring expedition; the one who went to the East returned without having seen a sign of the foe; the one dispatched to the North has not yet appeared. And unfortunately we have not taken even one prisoner. Not a sign of a human footprint have we seen on the whole march along the lake. Once, it is true, I thought I saw a light column of smoke rising from the dense growth of rushes which stretches for leagues into the lake, and ordered the troops to halt; but the tiny cloud instantly vanished."

"I can understand the strategy of our admirable General only by crediting him with an almost offensive degree of caution," sneered the commander of the mailed horsemen. "By Hercules! Wherever they may hide, the Barbarians cannot be a day's march from us."

"Yes," Ausonius assented. "Yet I should think we might be strong enough to seek them and drive them from their hiding places."

Saturninus frowned slightly. "Your nephew's

opinion of my courage gives me no concern. But you, Prefect, have again forgotten that, by the Emperor's orders, we are not to disperse the Barbarians, but to surround them and force them to submission. We are too weak for this encircling, and must wait for the ships. Unless our fleet should block the lake, they will again escape, as they have often done, in their boats. Stick to your hexameters, my Pierian friend, and leave the Barbarians to me: it will be better for all concerned."

"Except the Barbarians!" replied Ausonius smiling, extending his hand to his friend.

"Who are probably the leaders of the enemy?"

"The Romans on the southern shore mention two names. The rest of the Alemanni provinces are mainly ruled by kings."

"So far do Germans carry royalty," nodded the learned Prefect. "May they always continue to be divided into numberless provinces under their hedge kings and village magistrates, whom each man obeys as much as he chooses."

"It seems that this state of things has changed. Many provinces are united in leagues, which hold together in peace as well as in war.

The men of Linzgau have no king now, it appears, only an aged count. But he must be a man of powerful intellect, since the gray-haired Hariowald has been chosen commander-in-chief of all the provinces leagued against us. True, we have not to deal solely with the Lentienses. After centuries of folly these Barbarians are beginning to discover that 'liberty,' that is, the privilege of doing what each man pleases without regard to his neighbor, is, though a delightful, a somewhat dangerous pleasure, and that with such 'liberty' they will be forever our bondmen, so long as one province looks on with malicious pleasure while we subjugate another with which it has had a quarrel — till its own turn comes. Formerly they preferred to place their surplus of young men at our disposal rather than have them obey the commands of one of their own people, but for some time there has been a change; even those splendid soldiers, my Batavians, no longer wish to remain with me, and will not renew their oath of service. We no longer hear the names of numberless small peoples: five or six great leagues fill the whole country from the Ister to the Suabian Sea. It has long made

me uneasy. That old man is now the commander-in-chief of all the Germans allied against us."

"Commander-in-chief of the Alemanni!"

"Don't laugh at them, Ausonius! Ay, this leadership of the woodland war has cost us much blood and many a dear-bought victory, since the days of that Quinctilius Varus. As the white-beard is said to be the head, a young relative of his is called the arm, the sword, the fire-brand of the conflict."

"What is his name?"

"Attalus."

"Adalo! That was one of Bissula's playmates. She often mentioned him. I saw him frequently; he looked at me defiantly enough. Could it be he?"

"The women and men at our stations along the lake cannot say enough in praise of his beauty and strength."

"Well, hitherto neither the warlike wisdom of the old man nor the warlike zeal of the young one has showed itself," sneered Herculanus.

"Yes," laughed Ausonius. "Their wisdom is the resolve to run away, and their zeal the energy with which they execute the decision."

But the Tribune, with frowning brow, cried: "Such speeches drive away the goddess of victory and summon the avenger of foolhardiness. Jeer after we have conquered — and even then, it is wiser not to do it. Nemesis sleeps lightly."

"If you cannot discover where the Barbarians are hiding, what will you do?"

"Seek them until I do find them and bring them to a halt."

"But then," cried Herculanus, "let there be no treaties, no mercy, nothing save extermination. How often these faithless people have broken the peace! Our legions are full of fury against the Barbarians who, year after year, compel them to march through these horrible marshy forests. Only the extirpation of the last German will give peace to the Roman Empire." He clenched his fist threateningly.

"You have perhaps uttered words of prophecy," said Saturninus thoughtfully, "but in a different sense from what you intended."

"He has uttered abominable words!" cried Ausonius, filling his goblet. "And they are utterly groundless. Ay, more than a century

ago it looked as if the Persians and Germans under Gallienus would flood the Eastern and the Western Empire. But since that time Eternal Rome has grown young once more. Your brave countrymen, my Saturninus, the heroic Illyrian emperors, have curbed the barbarians on the Euphrates, the Rhine, and the Ister. Diocletian has remodelled the internal affairs of the Empire; and so I might adapt to Rome's mastery of the world the proud words of my colleague Horace: 'He did not lack talent, but he possessed little learning.'"

"Do they belong to poetry?" asked Saturninus doubtfully.

But the eager speaker, without hearing his words, continued: "What he said concerning the permanence and spread of his own renown I will apply to the glory of Rome: it will increase and grow, so long as the priest ascends the hill to the Capitol with the silent Virgin. The Vestal," he added in explanation.

"H'm," observed the Illyrian, "only it's a pity that the hypothesis is no longer apt."

"What? How so?"

"The pious Constantine, of murderous memory (I hear they want to canonize the assassin

of his mother and his wife) prohibited or restricted the offering of sacrifices at the Capitol, and your pupil and patron, Gratianus, recently abolished the Vestals."

CHAPTER XIII.

"OH, that must not be taken so literally," Ausonius remarked.

"I am not superstitious. I rely possibly too much upon my sword and too little upon heaven; and I care nothing about the Vestal virgins. But I do not like the second step your pupil took last year in Rome."

"What do you mean?"

"He removed from the council-hall of the Senate the altar of the goddess of victory, where sacrifices were offered before the opening of debates."

"Constantine had removed it previously."

"But Julian, the mighty conqueror of the Alemanni, restored it. And, by Jupiter!—pardon me, by God!—with good success. The priests called him 'the apostate,' but the goddess of victory was not unfaithful to him. Now men fight stoutly, with or without the goddess of victory. But—I am a Roman—I dread the omen."

"You see the matter in too dark colors."

"You see it in too rosy a light. Your kind heart wishes good to all."

"Yes, even to the Barbarians!" Ausonius nodded, raising his goblet. "They are human beings, too. And as the Stoa, not the Galilean, first taught, all men are brothers."

"But there are too many of these yellow-maned brothers."

"And I believe in a deity — call him by whatever name you choose — that directs all things well. Therefore I believe that these Barbarians will listen to reason and soon offer you their submission."

"Perhaps the little girl — what is her name? Bissula — will also surrender to Ausonius," said the Tribune in a jesting tone.

"Oh, the dear child! If I could only see her again."

"Do not wish it, Prefect."

"Why?"

"Perhaps she will conquer you! She would not be the first Barbarian. Was it Pipa — or Pipara — that the girl of the Marcomanni was called, with whom even an emperor fell desperately and hopelessly in love?"

"You forget. I wanted her for a daughter, not a wife."

"At that time. Now she is no longer a child — and you are a widower."

"Alas! she probably fled with her people long ago. And yet, I am so ready to believe what I desire!"

"Yes, that is one of your most amiable weaknesses."

"Am I to hope for what I fear?"

"No, but to think what we do not desire more probable than what we wish — that is *my* wisdom."

"No, no! I will not allow myself to be robbed of the hope that I shall again see the little nymph of these forests."

"But if I catch her," cried the Tribune, laughing, "she will be mine according to the laws of war."

A sudden change of expression — like a flash of lightning — flickered across Herculanus's haggard visage. The Tribune did not see; his eyes were fixed upon Ausonius's face, wondering that his features should pale with fear.

"Can this feeling be so deep-seated in my worthy friend?" he thought.

"Uncle, surely you know that the Tribune is jesting," cried Herculanus, as if to comfort him.

The Illyrian turned toward him with a threatening bearing, saying in a stern, grave tone: "Who tells you so?"

Ausonius cast a hasty, anxious glance at the handsome, stately man; then he tried to smile, but the attempt was not very successful. "Your jest brought before me the possibility of a terrible earnest. If the charming, innocent child should fall into the hands of one of our pitiless centurions! Horrible!"

"It has been the fate of thousands — pshaw, what am I saying — of many hundred thoussands, since we Romans bore our eagles over the world. You poets — even you, my softhearted friend — are fond of singing the praises of war. I tell you, he who knows and directs it rarely lauds it. War is necessary. I laugh at the foolish weaklings who, like the worthy stoics, or the monks, imagine that some day there will be a kingdom of eternal peace. War is grand; death for one's native land is the most powerful feeling that rules mankind; but war is horrible! To me it does not matter," he added,

laughing, as he drained his goblet. "I need only make war, not answer for it, and above all, I need not sing its praises. I am neither anvil nor lyre; I am hammer, and woe to the vanquished! For a thousand years we have carried the terrors of our victories to all nations: an unprecedented loyalty on the part of Fortuna. But now — I hope I shall not witness it — now her wheel is gradually rolling backward — toward us — over us!"

"Never!" cried the poet. "What can these half-naked Barbarians do against us? So long as we have warriors like you and, for the service of the Muses, minds —"

"Like Ausonius's, do you mean? Enviable self-reliance! I tell you, I consider myself — and far better soldiers than I — incapable of resisting this ever-advancing ocean which is called 'Germans.' I have gone through many a campaign against them — against these very Alemanni. I think they know my name! But there is something mysterious under this surging multitude — I know not what — a motive power unintelligible to us all, which can no more be resisted with sword and spear than the sea itself. I have long sought the clue to the

secret, yet cannot find it. But so far as the service of the Muses is concerned — pardon a rude soldier — we need peasants, not poets. There are only millionaires, beggars, and slaves. Give me a hundred thousand free peasants of the ancient Latin stock, and I'll sacrifice in return for them all the Latin poets, dead and living, and once more believe in the future of Rome. As things are — but it is already late," he cried, starting up. "Let us seek our couches. We shall not be able to end this old conflict of ours; coming generations will decide it, but not with words. Good-night! Dream of Bissula — that we may find her: you believe in dreams. For to-morrow — Nannienus has at least completed a couple of ships which he will send to cruise along the northern shore — we will make a little expedition eastward."

He raised the curtain and strode in his clanking armor out into the darkness; he could not help thinking constantly of the beautiful wood-nymph. Herculanus also took his leave, but he was scarcely outside the tent when he shook his clenched fist threateningly toward the east, muttering through his set teeth: "Wait, Barbarian witch!" But Ausonius stretched himself

on his camp bed, put out the light, and murmured: "Sleep peacefully, my Bissula, wherever you may be; to-morrow perhaps I shall once more see those never-to-be-forgotten eyes."

CHAPTER XIV.

AT daybreak the tuba sounded through the Roman camp, summoning to departure the bands who were to share the expedition.

"Where is my nephew?" asked Ausonius, mounting the beautiful gray Cantabrian stallion, whose stirrup was held by old Prosper. "He is usually the first at my bedside to greet me."

"He hastened on with his mailed riders long ago. He started even before the Tribune."

"What zeal! I like that," said the uncle, patting the neck of his noble steed. "At home in Burdigala he devoted his time solely to—"

"To spending your money, O patron!" growled the old man.

"Pshaw, never mind, graybeard! My money—it will soon be his money."

"May the Olympians—forgive me, the saints—forbid!"

"Put no restraint on yourself on my account. I prefer them too. They have the advantage

of suiting the metre better, at least most of them. Where is Saturninus?"

"Gone already. He left word that you might follow: you could not miss the way. See, there are the helmets of the last men in his rear-guard. His countryman Decius commands them."

"I see. Forward! How beautifully the morning light smiles upon us. Help me, unconquered sun-god!"

He put spurs to his horse and, followed by a brilliant train of mounted men, dashed down the hill and through the Porta Principalis Dextra eastward, toward the sun. A guide had sought the best path at the earliest dawn, marking it by placing at certain spaces small stones carried in bags by the pioneers who accompanied and watched him. The Prefect of Gaul soon reached the path trodden by Adalo a few days before, which led to Suomar's lonely forest dwelling. With a throbbing heart he recognized the familiar spot: the little hill, the broad-branched oak, the neighboring spring: nothing had changed in the few years, except that another piece of tilled land had been wrested by fire from the primeval forest.

At the fence which inclosed the court-yard he sprang from his horse; he had ordered his escort to halt at the oak-tree. The blood suffused his face, so intense was his anxiety. The narrow gate in the palisade stood ajar. Entering the yard, he uttered a cry of joyful astonishment: a little flower garden had been laid out beside the door of the house; he recognized with emotion in the gay blossoms, now in the full bloom of summer, the seeds and slips which he had given the child in Arbor, nay, even ordered from Gaul. Italian and Gallic flowers and shrubs, evidently tended by loving hands, splendid roses and evergreen yews greeted him in thick beds, and also small fruit-trees, Pontine cherries, Picentinian apples, Aquitanian pears, had grown as high as the door.

"Yes, yes," said Ausonius, smiling, "how everything has grown and blossomed in five years!" Then something whirred over his head; from openings in the stable-roof a whole flock of dainty little blue-gray doves flew across the garden to the neighboring field of oats. "See," cried Ausonius, looking after them. "My Lycian rock-doves from Burdigala! How that one pair has multiplied!"

He hesitated to enter the house. Doubtless he told himself that the hope of finding her he sought was faint, nay futile. But here everything seemed to bear witness to her presence; there on the bench before the dwelling lay — he knew them well — the delicate garden shears which he had sent to her from Vindonissa. He did not wish to cross the threshold and rob himself of every hope.

The clank of armor came from the open door: a centurion belonging to Herculanus's troop approached, bowing respectfully. "Everything is empty, *vir illuster*, the Tribune sends word. And we are to ask you — we are burning all the Barbarians' houses — whether this too —"

"Let it remain uninjured."

The man nodded with a look of pleasure. "I am glad to obey the order. It would have been a hard task to destroy this home. Umbrian roses, Picentinian mallows, like those which grow around my parents' house in Spoletium, in the midst of the Barbarians' marshes! Who can have wrought this miracle?"

"A poet," replied Ausonius, smiling, "and the fourth, the youngest, of the Graces. So Saturninus was here himself?"

"Yes, but even before him your nephew, with me. Herculanus searched everywhere carefully, nay, greedily. He forbade my accompanying him. I was obliged to wait at the entrance."

"The good fellow! He wanted to bring her to me himself, to surprise me—"

"Directly after Herculanus left, Saturninus dashed up."

"Where did the troop go from here?"

"Yonder into the forest, keeping to the left, steadily to the left, away from the lake. Otherwise horses and men would sink in the morass. You will find sentinels posted in the woods every three hundred paces. I, with three men, form the commencement of the chain here."

"See that the yard and garden are not injured. I'll promise in return a jug of the best wine."

With these words he turned away, mounted his horse and, followed by his escort, rode toward the left across the tilled land and meadows surrounding the dwelling to the entrance of the neighboring wood, where the helmets and

spears of the next sentinels glittered brightly in the sunshine.

But Herculanus had not been content with thoroughly searching the deserted house. He had also carefully examined the neighborhood for some trace of the vanished girl. He was soon unable to ride farther through the tangled underbrush; so, leaping from his horse, he gave his Mauritanian roan charger into the care of the only man he had permitted to accompany him, and glided on foot through the thicket. A sort of path which he had discovered with much difficulty and followed for some distance suddenly ended.

While vainly searching for the stones and bits of wood which hitherto, though at long distances, had marked the direction of the way, he saw plainly in the marshy ground of the forest the imprint of human footsteps. And the people who had passed here were not Romans: the troops had never yet pressed so far eastward. Besides, the prints were not like those made by the seeker's own heavy Roman marching shoes: he intentionally trod lightly close beside the marks he had found, but how differ-

ent was the track! His deep footprints instantly filled with the reddish-yellow marsh-water, which oozed from the ground at the least pressure. But within a short time some one had walked by here barefooted with a lighter tread. Indeed, not one person, but several. For besides one mark which seemed to belong to a child, always one step behind was a somewhat heavier and broader impression, and invariably at the right of it a narrow but deep little hole filled with water, as if made by the sharp end of a staff, while partly at the left, partly two paces in advance, a man's heavier tread seemed unmistakable.

The Roman followed the footprints with eager zeal; if he did not find those whom he sought, he would have the credit of being the first to discover the direction in which the Barbarians had fled. Suddenly the traces appeared to vanish, in front of a large hawthorn bush which barred the way. From beneath the hand thrusting the thorns aside a little brown bird with a red breast flew up startled. Bending forward, the Roman peered into the bush, then a cry of glad surprise escaped his lips: "Aha! She passed here! She herself!"

Slowly, slowly he drew through his hand a shining red-gold hair which had caught on a thorn: it was at least an ell long. And beyond the thorn-bush the footprints were again visible, even more distinctly than before, on a patch of damp sand. What seemed a child's footprints were made by her steps.

CHAPTER XV.

THE underbrush grew thinner, evidently removed by human hands; a few steps more and the pursuer stood in an open space in the forest which had been cleared by fire. Here stood a little hut, very roughly built of unhewn logs: instead of doors two low narrow holes were opposite each other. Such buildings were used by hunters for stations, by shepherds overtaken in the forest by storms for a shelter, but especially to keep quantities of hay which could not be dragged to the distant barns. That was the case here; heaps of the grass piled in stacks could be seen through the holes.

Before Herculanus had reached the hut, an indistinct sound reached his ear from the right, the shore of the lake. He drew his sword and stopped, listening intently. There it came again! Was it a cry? It seemed like the shout with which Romans on guard gave warning of the presence of a foe. Directly after-

wards he heard another noise: it was like the whirring of the string in bending and releasing the wood of the bow, then came a heavy fall or plunge into the water, and all was still again. Nothing but the metallic tapping of the woodpecker broke the silence of the forest.

Cautiously raising his shield to his eyes and looking watchfully toward the right, the Roman, with his thin figure drawn to its full height, waited several seconds longer: nothing stirred.

He now sprang in two bounds across the open ground to the hut of hay, stooped and entered through the northern hole. Something rustled under the thick grass, which seemed to be alive: something glided beneath it — was it a weasel? — toward the opposite hole: only the waving motion of the bundles of hay betrayed the direction.

Herculanus hastily grasped with his shield arm at the creature making the rustling and lifted the broad short sword in his right for a death-stroke. He seized something warm and drew it upward from the hay, which fell on the right and left as he dragged forward a girl whose face was covered with tangled red locks and

blades of grass, through which she gazed in mortal terror and fiery wrath at her assailant.

So strange, so bewitchingly beautiful was the young creature that Herculanus uttered a fierce cry of pleasure. He had vowed that the first moment he had the dangerous Barbarian alone within reach of his sword, should be her last; and even now he did not really waver in the resolve. Neither pity nor passion could influence a mind fixed solely on his uncle's wealth, yet so much youthful beauty awakened a fleeting desire for it: before he stabbed the foe, he would have one kiss from those red lips. So, reserving his right hand for the death-blow, he drew her closer to him with the left. The girl struggled with the strength of despair. Turning her head as far as possible from him, she uttered a cry of terror, like a dying fawn. It was only a moment's delay of the assassin's thrust, but it saved her.

Before Herculanus could press his lips on her averted face a shadow fell from outside upon the opening toward the lake, where the struggling figures were now standing. "Murderer!" cried a deep voice; and Herculanus, receiving a severe blow on the breast, staggered

back, loosing his hold upon his captive. Swiftly as the trout glides away, the girl tried to slip through the opening; but she felt her arm seized in the iron grasp of a much stronger hand, and looked up at another helmeted Roman.

"Is it you, Tribune?" stammered Herculanus, hastily thrusting his sword into the sheath.

The latter did not vouchsafe him a single word. "You are Bissula, little one, are you not?" he asked, gazing with wondering eyes at the strange vision. A sweet rapture ran through his veins as he saw the lovely little face, the delicate, graceful limbs, the bare white feet, and felt the pulsing of the young life through the round arm his hand held so firmly.

The prisoner made no reply, but she looked up trustfully into the Illyrian's handsome, manly face. Then she cast a strange glance, as if seeking for some one, back into the hut,— Saturninus had dragged her from the doorway into the open air,— and seemed to be listening anxiously.

"Yes, it is Bissula," said Herculanus, now also coming out. "What made you imagine

that I wanted to kill her? I have been searching for her since the earliest dawn."

"So I thought."

"Not for myself; I was only holding her firmly to prevent her escape."

"With a quivering sword uplifted to strike?"

"Only to frighten her."

But Bissula cast a reproachful glance at him.

"However that may be," the Illyrian continued, "she is my captive." His glowing eyes rested on her; the girl lowered her long lashes in embarrassment.

"No, no! I discovered her."

"But before you seized her a second time — for she was free again — I captured her. Dare to contradict it, you murderer of girls!" and he advanced threateningly toward him.

The sound of a tuba rang from the forest.

"We must return. The tuba gives a sign of warning," said Saturninus. "The first trace of the foe has been found — not only the child — a man."

Bissula looked up anxiously.

"He lay covered with skins," the other added, as they moved forward, "hidden among the rushes so that he could not be distin-

guished from a fallen tree. Before we could seize him—"

Bissula uttered a sigh of relief.

"He had vanished in the sedges. A Batavian archer shot an arrow after him. Hark! the Prefect is giving the signal again. Come without fear, child."

He led her by the wrist, carefully trying not to hurt her; but she often stopped, glancing back at the hut, and once also at the lake. After a few steps they heard the neighing of a horse and soon entered an opening in the forest, where Ausonius had halted his mounted escort.

"Father Ausonius!" cried the captive joyously, struggling to release herself to rush to him.

But the Illyrian's grasp on her arm became like iron. Approaching the Prefect, who held out both arms to Bissula, he made a military salute, saying sternly: "The first encounter with the enemy! A man has escaped: a girl—this one—became my prisoner: my slave."

BOOK TWO

THE SLAVE

CHAPTER XVI.

DURING those days the vicinity of the Holy Mountain, where a large number of fugitives had taken refuge, was full of busy life, and from the north, the quarter not threatened by the Romans, reinforcements were constantly arriving from other provinces.

The Tribune's efforts to discover the retreat of the fugitives had been baffled hitherto; neither those in the marshes nor on Odin's Mountain had been overtaken by the spies and reconnoitring parties of the Roman General. Marshes and impenetrable primeval forests surrounded the Roman camp on the Idisenhang on every side except southward toward the lake.

In the last few days, after a tremendous thunder storm, a southwest wind had sprung up, bringing on its dripping wings pouring torrents of rain; then the forests became absolutely impassable for the heavy tread of the legions: the few fords were buried in marshes or overflowed; the tiniest rivulet became a raging river. Sulky and shivering, the intruders, principally natives of the south, remained in the camp under plank roofs and leather tents, fanning day and night the flames of huge fires which, however, as all the wood was wet, diffused more smoke than warmth.

For long distances from the foot of the mountain the few and narrow openings which led to the interior of the immense forests were blocked and barricaded by felled trees. Huge oaks, ashes, and pine-trees had been felled and piled one above another more than the height of a man, strengthened by earth and turf, and held together at regular distances by enormous posts driven into the ground or by trees which had been left standing. Thus an almost insurmountable breastwork was formed, on whose summit, and in the tops of the trees towering above it, the best archers were stationed. Simi-

lar lines of defence were repeated, one behind another, wherever the locality permitted. The legions would have needed many more days than the brief time still remaining before the end of August — they always finished their short summer campaigns in Germany before the commencement of the autumn rains — to storm all these fortifications; they could scarcely find it possible to make a circuit of them, on account of the marshes. But even if they succeeded in penetrating all the barricades to the foot of the mountain, they would then be forced to begin the inexpressibly toilsome siege of this natural fortress.

All the entrances were covered by several tiers of logs; while, on the mountain itself, rising one behind another, was a whole system of "ring walls." These extremely powerful and extensive fortifications dated principally from Celtic times, but had been considerably strengthened and enlarged in scope by the Alemanni during their occupation of the country for more than the past century: they had been forced to seek refuge here from the Roman troops often enough.

These walls were made of heaped up earth,

turf, palisades, and so called Cyclopean walls: that is, rocks, so closely joined together without mortar or bricks, by a skilful use of their points, edges, and fissures that fire, tearing asunder, and the blows of the ram seemed equally ineffectual.

Each one of these rings, which rose in stories, like terraces, required to be stormed as a separate fortress. Each lower one was protected not only by its own garrison, but by all those above, since they were so constructed that stones, logs, spears, and arrows from all the upper walls could strike the enemy without injuring the combatants on the one beneath. Seven such defences girdled the mountain, the topmost one surrounding the summit, which concealed Odin's altar in the heart of an ash forest.

Those unable to fight, the women, children, old men, and slaves, were scattered through all the stories of the mountain fortress. The herds had been driven to the rear on the northern side, where their lowing, neighing, and bleating would be as far as possible from the enemy. The fugitives rested at night in huts built of thick green foliage, often with the skin of some

animal fastened among the branches, which the Alemanni had great skill in constructing. Nor was there any lack of cellarlike subterranean passages where stores of grain and valuables were concealed.

The fighting men garrisoned all the entrances, reconnoitred in small bands, especially at night, beyond the barricades close to the neighborhood of the Roman camp. They spent the day in feats of arms or drilling, impatiently enduring the long delay in giving battle, and grumbling at the incomprehensible procrastination of their white-haired Duke. For the latter, Adalo, and other leaders, huts of leaves had been built on the summit of the mountain with the tents of their followers scattered around them.

Before one of these huts (a stag's antlers had been cut on the central post for a house mark) on the day after Bissula's capture, a bright fire was burning late in the evening, fed with pine cones which had been protected from the wet under the stone closing the opening of a cellar. It was supplied by a man about forty years old, whose cropped hair showed that he was a slave; while the shape of his short face, his dark eyes,

high cheek bones and snub nose denoted that he was not of German lineage. Suomar had bought him many years before in Vindonissa; cheap enough, for Valentinian — or the slave dealer — had brought countless captives from the Jazyge war.

In front of the fire, sheltered from the wind and smoke, old Waldrun lay on a bearskin, her feet covered with another. Adalo was kneeling beside her. Mirthfulness and wrath had vanished; deep sorrow clouded his handsome face. He gave the blind woman some wine to drink from a silver goblet. Both beaker and wine were booty wrested from the Roman.

CHAPTER XVII.

"TELL me everything once more, Zercho," he said earnestly, "until Waldrun has recovered and can add what you did not see. I have not yet clearly understood the one thing upon which all depends."

The bondman was now crouching beside the fire, trying to keep the smoke from the white-haired woman with the wolf-skin he wore for a cloak. It did not annoy her at all, but it helped him to avert his eyes from the youth's searching gaze.

"It happened in this way, handsome neighbor. Directly after you leaped down the slope in anger, — I saw it from the stable, — the little red sprite ordered me to bury the master's coins (alas, there are very few of them!) and the brass vessels and broken-handled jug which he obtained three winters ago at Brigantium. I had already driven the cow, the sheep, and the goats into the alder thicket.

"The next day I was to take the young

mistress and her grandmother into the marshes to Suomar, the master. But alas, the hot and cold cat, which invisibly shakes the body like a mouse, often springs upon the good old mistress. So it was the next day. The sufferer could hardly stir her aged limbs from the couch; her strength was as feeble as a dying torch; I almost had to carry her. But I could do this only on solid ground: in the forest marshes I should have sunk with my burden — strong bones weigh heavily. So, in the forest, the blind woman was obliged to walk by herself, leaning on her staff and guided by the little elf, while I jumped from stone to stone in advance, seeking the best path. But just before we reached the hay hut, the grandmother fell; she could no longer stand or walk. We carried her in. You know the entrance to the old cave is just beside the left corner post. Down below there it was safe, warm, and for her no darker than above. We spent the rest of the day and the night in it. Bissula, in spite of every warning, would not leave the old woman and go on with me.

"She had brought some milk in a goat-skin, and rye bread. I watched outside near the hut. In the gray dawn I stole back westward toward

the edge of the forest to watch for the helmeted Romans. Soon I saw a small band of mounted men dash straight to Suomar's dwelling. I had hidden our old log boat and the oars among the thickest rushes and meant to row it through the marsh as near the hut as possible, carry the sick woman to it, and then try to take my two mistresses to Suomar by way of the lake. But when I reached the shore I saw several ships —their lofty prows and triangular sails marked them as Roman galleys—moving from Arbor on the opposite side toward our shore. They would soon be very near. The way by the water was barred; but at the right, from the west, I already heard the trampling of horses through the marshes and meadows close beside me.

"Two men with arrows and long bows in their right hands dashed by, not a spear's length distant. I crouched among the rushes, nay in the swamp to my lips; but in doing so I startled the great egret that always fishes there. As, screaming loudly—silly bird—he soared upward over the rushes, he attracted the attention of the riders to himself and, unluckily, to me too. They saw my head. A bow whirred,

an arrow whizzed through my otter cap and grazed my head. The wound wasn't deep; Zercho's skull is hard, Suomar often says so, and this time, it was a good thing. I now swam out into the lake, diving like a duck as long as I could hold my breath.

"When I was forced to rise, the men had disappeared. Cautiously as the fox stealing after the mouse, I crept on all fours through the thickest rushes nearer to the land, in the direction of the hut, but making a wide circuit. Then I saw two Romans in glittering armor step into the clearing in the forest: one was leading the young mistress by the arm—"

Adalo heard this for the second time, but he again sighed deeply.

"A horse neighed behind us, and on it sat the clever old man who a few winters ago read to the little one in Arbor from many, many parchments, oh, such a long, horribly long time—while I was obliged to wait to row her back across the lake."

"Are you perfectly sure," asked Adalo, seizing the bondman by the shoulder and forcing him to turn his averted face, "that this horseman was the old Roman?"

"Well, he isn't so very old," replied the Sarmatian evasively, "though he has grown somewhat grayer since that summer."

"Answer," cried Adalo angrily. "Can you swear that the rider was Ausonius?"

"Ausonius! Yes, yes, that is what she always called him, Father Ausonius. And that's what she cried out yesterday when she saw him: 'Father Ausonius!' she shrieked."

He broke off abruptly and began to rub his head (the wound suddenly seemed to pain him) muttering meanwhile in his Sarmatian dialect, which Adalo did not understand.

"So it was really he," sighed Adalo. "And I must thank the gods for having led her to him."

"Freya will reward you for it," said the blind woman suddenly, raising herself on her left arm and groping with her right hand in the direction of the voice until she reached the youth's head and stroked his long locks. "The dwellers in Asgard will repay you for such thoughts."

"Must I not cherish them, Mother? Oh, if you could only sit up again!"

"Your drink, the Romans' drink, cheers the weary soul."

"Ausonius will protect her from the others. But," Adalo went on angrily, "who will defend her from Ausonius? She was tenderly attached to him."

"As a child to its father."

"Be it so—at that time. But now the maiden will owe him gratitude for everything, even the highest boon."

During this conversation Zercho had repeatedly looked thoughtfully at both; now he scratched himself behind the ear and was about to make some remark, but changed his mind and remained silent.

"Against my warning," said the old woman, continuing the bondman's story, "the child had glided away from my side out of the cellar into the hut. She grew tired of waiting in the dark hole for Zercho's return. Suddenly I heard a man's heavy step above me; then a shriek from the little one, which made me tremble. But by the time I had groped my way to the stone slab and lifted it, all was still. I vainly called her name. Soon Zercho came with the news that he had seen her led away captive. We sorrowfully waited for the darkness. My fever had left me; I could walk slowly, but

faithful Zercho sought our cow and found her among the tall reeds in the swamp, lifted me upon her and, by a wide circuit through the forest, brought me here."

"For I had seen Italian galleys between the forest hut and Suomar in the eastern marshes," remarked the Sarmatian. The enemy was reconnoitring there, so I tried to reach the mountain, as my mistress preferred."

"Yes; for since Suomar, my son, cannot be reached, it is you, Adalo, of all the men of our people, our kind neighbor, the playfellow of her childhood, to whom I must lament. The dear one is a captive: help — rescue — liberate her."

The youth passed his hand sadly over his beautifully arched eyebrows. "Yes," he thought, with bitter grief, "a captive through the fault of her own defiance and obstinacy." But he said nothing, only thinking: "It will be a difficult task. If it depended upon me — from the moment I heard it I would have stormed the Idisenhang so constantly and fiercely that the Italians would have had neither inclination nor leisure to torment the child. Or to win her," he added bitterly. "But the army is under

the sole command of my cousin Hariowald, the Duke. I cannot—"

Here a low growl interrupted him: he turned and saw a singular spectacle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A HANDSOME boy about fourteen, whose strong resemblance to Adalo marked him as his brother — only his curling locks were light yellow, almost white — was dragging by the ear a huge she-bear, which, growling, struggling, but yielding, allowed herself to be drawn nearer and nearer to the fire.

"Down, Bruna!" cried the lad, forcing the huge animal to lie prostrate. "You dearly loved the merry, dancing girl too. Look, you growling brown giantess, that's only the grandmother, and Zercho, who always brought you so much wild-honey from the bee-wood. But *she* is missing; our Bissula is gone. Ah, if you had been there, you would have defended her savagely; for you haven't forgotten that she and Adalo saved you, dragged you out of the torrent. When you were scarcely bigger than a kitten the cloud-burst swept you away from your mother, and you cried piteously as you were drowning. And her busy hands fed

you even more eagerly than ours, with rich milk, rye bread, and dainty wild berries. Since you first opened your blinking eyes, which now look as though you knew as much as a human being, you have recognized her as your best friend. Oh, if you had been with her, no one would have dared to seize her. O brother, strong brother, you hero and shield of the whole province, bring her back! Alas, if the little one, with her dainty hands, should be forced to heat the bath-water for the hated foe and wash his feet, as I often saw their maid-servants do in Arbor! Why don't we rush down on the wings of the storm and hew her out of the high-walled camp citadel?"

He swung his little wolf spear: the fire blazed up brightly as he stood in the light of the flames, a handsome boyish figure, in his light-blue linen robe bordered with white swan's down.

"Yes, my Sippilo," said the older brother with ill-repressed sorrow, "you loved her too."

The boy looked up startled, but Adalo continued:

"Yes, yes. Perhaps she is dead — to us, to our people. Perhaps we shall never see her

again, never hear her sweet, elfish, mocking laugh."

"Oh, the smoke! How it stings!" cried the lad, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Perhaps she went with the Italians willingly," said Adalo, torturing himself savagely — "with the clever Ausonius!"

"Is he here again?" cried Sippilo. "I'll run him through like a fat carp that is sunning itself in shallow water. Oh, I used to wish he might fall under the curse of Odin and the sun. Whenever I went to get frogs for fishing or to play ball, she had always rowed over to him or would not leave the long rolls of runes over which she racked her brains. He had given them to her. If only I could catch him!"

"If we only had her back again! My heart is consumed with anxiety."

"Guard yourself from consuming anxiety, my son," said the old woman in a warning tone. "It will paralyze your thoughts and arm; and you will need both to liberate the naughty child. I am no prophetess, but I have had strange dreams since I grew blind — which often come to pass: I saw you to-night wounded,

severely wounded. Guard your life. If she should be rescued, and no longer find you—"

"Then her vengeful wish would be fulfilled. She hates me. She shouted it loudly enough."

Sippilo laughed. "You? Hate you? She loves you better than a sister. How I always had to tell her about you, everything you were doing,—your prizes of honor in the contests; the gifts of neighboring princes; your last verses; whom they praised! When I met her on the lake quite lately, she asked if Jettaburga and her father did not often visit the Stag Hall. When I said that they no longer came there, for sheer delight she loosed from her own waist the beautiful blue girdle she always wore, and gave it to me. See, there it is. I always carry it hidden in my blouse. And, Bruna, didn't she once kiss you between the eyes, when I told her how you had sprung to Adalo's assistance in the chase and torn the furious wild bull which was goring his horse? Yes, Bruna, you are faithful to her too. You have trotted after us for hours when we were gathering berries and mushrooms, and watched our noonday nap."

Just at that moment a long-drawn blast of a

horn echoed from the summit of the mountain. Adalo started up.

"The Duke is calling. We are to consult about what is to be proposed in the people's council. Zercho, come with me. He wishes to question you about the number of the enemy's mounted men. You, Sippilo, take care of Mother Waldrun; that is all you can do for your Bissula."

"For the present," said the boy looking after his brother. "But I will take part in storming the camp fortress where the scoundrels hold captive the prettiest little bird—little gold-crested wren, no, little redbreast—in the land of the Alemanni." He raised his clenched fist threateningly.

CHAPTER XIX.

OUTSIDE of the Duke's tent also a huge fire was blazing, fed by slaves who were roasting on the ends of poles the haunches and back of a freshly killed stag. Adalo passed by, motioning to Zercho to wait, parted the sail-cloth stretched over the wooden frame of the tent, and entered.

The roof was formed of interwoven pine branches; against the poles of the light timber-work hung and rested everywhere weapons of all kinds. Skins covered the turf floor which, opposite to the entrance, was raised until it formed a high seat; a curtain of heavy linen hung behind it, dividing from the front of the tent a small space used for a sleeping room. In the centre stood an iron tripod, running to a point at the top, into which was screwed a burning pine-torch that diffused a dim, flickering red light.

On the fur-covered high seat, with his back resting against the main column of the tent, sat

Duke Hariowald. He greeted his young kinsman only by a glance and seemed to heed nothing except the eager words of another guest, a man about forty years old, who, clad in a boarskin and wearing on his head a "boar helm" with the animal's tusks, sat at his right.

The old Duke, a giant in height, towering nearly a head above Adalo's tall figure, was a man of singular appearance. The immense framework of his body appeared to belong to a much older race of men. His deep-set gray eye — the left one had been destroyed by a stone from a Balearican sling long before, and the empty socket had a sinister expression — was under a bushy, prominent arched brow; its fire was by no means dimmed, but curbed by the long habit of self-control. This ever perceptible rule of passions blazing fiercely in his breast gave the mighty man, who in spite of his sixty-five winters could not be called old, an air of mysterious majesty. His people looked up to him with reverence, with timid expectation, nay, with a slight fear of what he was planning in rigid secrecy. His eagle eye was inscrutable when he half closed it; when open, the flash that blazed from it was fairly

blinding. The expression of the mouth was concealed by the magnificent silvery-white beard, sweeping over the breast-plate to the bronze belt, which framed the cheeks and mingled with the thick locks of hair of the same hue.

Like the eye, the strong, deep, resonant voice revealed, no matter how quietly the mighty man spoke, the sense of power held in check. He rarely moved his muscular limbs, and all his gestures had a calmness which was the result of long training. So he sat without a helmet, with his ample blue cloak floating from his shoulders, his bearing one of dignified composure. The majestic beauty of his finely formed head was plainly visible as he rested it against the tent-pole, listening intently. An immense spear rested in the curve of his right arm, its brass top rising above his shoulder, as the end touched the floor; he often stroked with a gentle, almost loving touch of the hand the runes of victory inscribed on the back of the ash handle.

"I am usually glad to greet you, son of Adalger," said the Duke's other guest, with a frowning brow, "but now I am most unwill-

ing. I pleaded for peace—" The Duke remained silent. "Now you come and you—I know it—dream of nothing day and night save war with Rome."

Adalo measured him with a wrathful glance. "The ancient foe of our people is in the country, and a king of the Alemanni counsels peace? Ebarbold, son of Ebur, fear was alien to your kinsmen—"

The other laid his hand on the curved knife in his belt. Adalo did not see it: he was under the spell of Hariowald's eye. A warning glance from the old man, and the youth hastily added, "and is unknown to you, hero of the wild-boar's courage."

The guest loosened his grip of the dagger and leaned back proudly.

"But Roman gold does not ensnare you," Adalo continued; "so some magic blinds you."

"Or *you* and all our crazy youths. The red drink of Zio, the war-god, has intoxicated you. Or," he added in a lower, almost timid tone, "He, Odin the Val-father, wishes again to people his Valhalla with slaughtered heroes."

A change of expression flashed over the Duke's face. He gently raised his spear and,

unheard by the others, murmured, "Mighty Odin, do not avenge the words." But Ebarbold went on:

"No matter about the boys! Their only art is war, and they have little sense; but that you, who have seen sixty winters and almost as many victories of the men with the high helmets — that you too should desire war! My friends, I went to Rome; I climbed to the citadel on the towering rock. It glitters with gold and marble. I served in the great Valentinian's army. I have seen for years the countless thousands of Roman warriors with their finest weapons, against which ours are like children's toys."

The Duke, unnoticed, pressed his spear closer to his breast.

"And the military engines, the huge galleys with three banks of oars one above another, the treasures of coined and uncoined gold and silver! The whole extent of the land, all Mittelgard, as far as men live — white, brown, and black — I've seen them painted on a long, long strip of hide. The rising and the setting of the sun serve Rome. In his golden house

on one of the seven hills of the Tiber the Imperator has placed a gold ball: all the provinces are copied on it. It is the work of a magician. If a foe crosses the boundary in the farthest north or south, the gold ball echoes and trembles in that spot; the Imperator hears it, looks, and sends the legions. We will not defy him. The Cæsar is a god on earth."

"Do not hear it, Mighty One!" the old Duke murmured, stroking the runes on his spear soothingly.

Adalo was about to make a vehement reply, but he involuntarily looked at the silent man, and controlled himself.

"We have learned that long enough, I think," Ebarbold continued; "from generation to generation, when each province still fought independently, long before this name and league of the Alemanni were heard and invented!"

"You don't like this league?" the Duke now asked suddenly.

The King started. The voice, hitherto mute, sounded so loud and powerful. Glancing up timidly, he shrugged his shoulders: "Whether I like it or not, I can no longer dissolve it."

"No, you cannot," said Hariowald very calmly, stroking his long beard; but his gray eye darted a glance which boded evil.

"You don't like the *name* of Alemanni either?" asked Adalo indignantly.

"No, Adeling. 'All men together!' Ha, our forefathers prided themselves on standing alone, province by province; nay, in the old days family by family, not leaning on others, and also not bound by them, not subject to the will of the majority."

"Yes, that's it!" said the old Duke with a fierce smile. "You were in the citadel of Rome — so was I. But I perceived with my one eye what you have not seen. You noticed the glittering lustre of their magnificence; it dazzled you: I saw through the glitter to the decay, the decline beneath. And one thing more," he added mysteriously, lowering his voice — "for several generations they have had no more luck with their own gods — with the new ones, I mean. Ay, the old one whom they formerly had —" he now spoke with a certain timidity, even reverence — "I mean the one with the thunderbolts and the eagle — he was a god of battles, almost like our own. Often his eagle

on their shields seemed to me to flap its wings, and the lightning to glow redly. Often and often have I seen them conquer under that handsome bearded god and his sons, Mars and Hercules. But now they have chosen for their god a youth, gentle and nobly wise, but no warrior. His own priests say he never held a sword in his hand. He did not descend from a line of gods; he was the son of a laborer. And this man — a carpenter — belonged to a race long in bondage to Rome, a people many of whom have wandered to us with packs on their bent backs, mere traders in spices. Not many of them are seen in the ranks of the legions. Since the Romans chose for their god that gentle teacher who would not even defend his own life, victory has deserted their standards. But what (besides their Jupiter in the clouds) formerly secured to them for centuries conquest on earth I also learned; the god whom I most honor showed it to me: one will controlled them all. They were already united men — all for one, and one for all, through many hundred winters; while we, according to the wish of your heart, fought province by province, each for himself, and — succumbed. This is your free-

dom — the freedom of discord and consequent destruction!"

The glowing wrath of enthusiastic conviction transfigured the old Duke's noble face.

CHAPTER XX.

EBARBOLD wished to cast a venomous glance at him, but was forced to lower his eyes in the presence of such lofty dignity. His lips curled bitterly as he replied:

"Beware, Hariowald. Your title is Duke, not King; and your reign ends when this war is over. According to your desire, it seems, one man must rule the Alemanni. From the earliest days we have had kings and counts of the provinces; but woe betide us if all the districts ever become the slaves of one king of the people."

"Are the gods slaves because *one* rules them as king?" The old Duke's voice sounded threatening.

Ebarbold answered evasively: "But here on earth we Alemanni have equal rights. And rather than—"

"Why do you hesitate?" asked Adalo angrily.

"He hesitates because he shrinks from uttering his thoughts. But the Lofty One gave me

the power to read the minds of men upon their brows like explained runes."

Flushing and paling, Ebarbold started up.

"This son of Ebur thinks," the Duke continued, "that rather than obey a king of the Alemanni he would serve the Cæsar."

Now Adalo sprang from his seat.

"And suppose it were so," cried Ebarbold, "would you prevent it? In a few weeks, when the leaves fall, your command of the army will end. But meanwhile—"

"Meanwhile I counsel you to obey."

"You?"

"Not me," the old man answered, with immovable composure, "but the Council which rules all the provinces—even yours, the Ebergau and its King. But sit down again, hot-tempered hero! And Adalo, hand him from the wall of the tent where it hangs, the mead horn. The heron of forgetfulness will rustle over our heads, bearing away on its wings the words of wrath and discord."

The two young men took their seats again. While the wild bull's horn, tipped at both ends with bronze, was passing around the circle, Ebarbold said: "Even if we should conquer

this time and drive this band of Romans from the country — we have learned the lesson often enough — others will come to avenge those who are defeated. So it has been for many generations."

"But so it will be no longer," the Duke answered slowly. "That is provided for. The evil she-wolf is surrounded by too many dogs at once. She can no longer raise her left paw to aid her right: the Goth is holding it firmly on the Danube, and she is still scarcely able to escape the bite of the Franconians on the Rhine."

"The Goths?" said Ebarbold. "Who knows whether they will be in the field this year?"

"I do," replied the Duke quietly.

"Can you see from here to Thrace?" sneered Ebarbold: "I cannot."

"But there is One who, from his throne in the clouds, overlooks all countries: and he revealed it to me."

"But I see the misery the Romans have wrought around us in our own land," the King continued. "My people have suffered heavily. The cohorts in passing through burned all the dwellings. My own hall too."

"We will rebuild them," cried Adalo, laughing, as he hung the horn on the wall. "The forest will not refuse trees to its people. My home below on the hillock beside the lake"—his face now grew grave—"is dear to me; sacred the hearth beside which I sat in my dear mother's lap while my father, skilled in the music of the harp, sung of the gods and the deeds of our own ancestors. The Centurion will probably soon hurl the torch into the ancient dwelling of my family with the rune of the stag's antlers. Never more can I hope to mount the high seat where I was so often allowed to fill my father's drinking horn. But though through all the future years I should have no other shelter for this head than the waving boughs of the woods, never will I yield to the Italians."

"Yield? The purpose is only to confirm a treaty such as we have often made."

"And the Romans as often broken," said Adalo."

"Or we ourselves. What is asked of us? Young men to fight the Cæsar's battles. We have more than we can feed. In return they will give us red gold."

"May Hel swallow up this gold and these treaties!" cried Hariowald. "For generations they have sold to our ancient foe our heart's blood and our young heroes, who were used against ourselves and our neighbors. If the hundreds of thousands who fell for Rome had banded together against Rome, we should have watered our long-maned horses long ago in the Gallic sea. But we will not cast aside your words, Ebarbold. Perhaps I may even consent to send an envoy to the Roman camp for peace!"

"What! Is that your wish?" cried Adalo impetuously.

"My wish will appear."

"To offer peace? Let them retire? With their booty?"

"It will not be hard to carry." Here a smile which lent the old Duke's lips a wonderful charm hovered around them. "Six pots in Iburninga and a broken mead vessel in Mariswik; so two old women complained to me."

"And the prisoners!" Adalo reminded him.

"They have only one, I hear," Ebarbold remarked, "the child of a small farmer."

"No matter, she is a free maiden, a daughter of our race," cried Adalo, with blazing

eyes. "She has a right to the protection of her people."

"Protection? A captive! What can we —"

"Release her with the sword — or avenge her."

"Commence, for the sake of one woman, the conflict which will destroy the people?"

"You are right," said the Duke slowly. "Women as well as men must be sacrificed for the welfare of the nation. Let her stay where she is — little Bissula."

"What, Bissula?" asked Ebarbold, startled. "Albfledis, whom they call Bissula? The beautiful red elf?"

"You know her?" Adalo asked.

"Who has not heard of her? She is talked of along the whole shore of the lake, and in such a way that the listener is anxious to see her. I too grew curious and tried to get a look at her lately, at the last sun-festival. It is a pity about her. By Freya's eyes, a great pity! But peace is worth more."

"Certainly," said Hariowald, "and victory still more."

"Victory is certain," exclaimed Adalo.

"Do you think so?" replied the old man

reprovingly. "I do not. Not yet," he corrected himself.

"Lead us to the attack on the Roman camp! Our men are pouring here in dense throngs since you sent the blood-red arrow from house to house."

"There are not yet enough. The army still lacks many men from distant provinces situated far away toward the north and the east: Alpgau, Albwins-Bar, Wisentgau, and Draggau."

"Do not calculate! Dare!"

"I am doing so; but I also consider the firmness of the Roman camp."

"But meanwhile our foes are strengthening themselves too. Their proud galleys already lie anchored opposite in Arbor; they will soon bring fresh cohorts over."

"Let them do so." The old Duke laughed softly; his look expressed a grim, mysterious joy. "Meanwhile," he added after a pause, "I will send an envoy to the foe to-morrow."

"Send me!" exclaimed Ebarbold eagerly.

"No. Adalo, you will go."

"He! He will not bring back peace."

"No, but keen scrutiny, and —" he whispered to the youth — "perhaps Bissula."

"Thanks! Thanks!"

"I," cried Ebarbold wrathfully, "would surely bring home to our people—"

"Subjection!" said the Duke. "That is just what you must not do. If the Italians reject fair proposals, then I will ask the Council of the people, the whole army, for its decision—"

"I know in advance," Ebarbold angrily interrupted, "what they will determine, guided by you, you disciple of Odin, you giver of victims to Zio! But your decision is one thing; it is another—"

He checked the word on his tongue and hesitated.

"That you will do, you wish to say, King of the Ebergau! I warn you, Ebarbold. Your father was a gallant hero: he fell by my side twenty winters ago in the murderous battle against Julian. Remembering him, I once more warn you: beware!"

"Look to yourself," cried Ebarbold angrily. "You are not my guardian!"

Springing up, he rushed out of the tent.

CHAPTER XXI.

ADALO, too, rose hastily. "Will you let him go in this threatening mood? Shall I follow?"

But the Duke remained unmoved. "I fear no danger from this man." A shudder ran through the youth's limbs and he started, as the old chief, lightly raising the spear, added: "He is dedicated to Odin."

"You will—?"

"Not I. He will—must sacrifice himself. Do not wonder. Wait."

"And the news about the Goths, Duke? Were you in earnest? Or did you merely wish to encourage the faint-hearted Ebarbold?"

"Aha, do you credit me with such craft in the good work?" asked the old man, smiling?

"You are Odin's favorite."

"It is as I said. One of the men in our ranks has been serving in the army of the other Emperor; he came home on leave of absence, and said that such countless throngs of Goths

had crossed the Danube and were assailing that Emperor so closely that he certainly could not march here to his young nephew's assistance. Nay, the nephew's whole army will perhaps be compelled to hasten to the uncle's relief. Because I knew this I permitted, nay, commanded our young leaders to cross the frontier early this spring to renew the war. But do you keep silence about it. And open your eyes wide in the Roman camp to-morrow: do not think only of the child, much as I hope you may see her, perhaps ransom her, or save her by stratagem. For, by Frigga's girdle, she is lovely! and I would fain see the fairest ornament of our land at liberty again."

Adalo clasped the Duke's right hand; but the latter withdrew it, adding sternly:

"Note carefully the height of the wall, the depth of the ditch, the position of the gates, the number of the tents, the direction of the paths between them, so that you can report everything accurately to me. Now go, and send Zercho the bondman. No, do not ask what I want with him. Obey!"

Adalo left the tent. His heart was throbbing violently. "I shall see her; ransom her! I

will give all my property; nay, if necessary, my estate, the land I have inherited — or sell it. But will she desire to be ransomed? Will she not prefer to go with the clever-tongued Italian to his sunny home? And what if he will not release her? Well, then there will at least be one way to bring her forth, known only to the Duke and my father's oldest son."

Fiercely agitated by such thoughts, he sent the bondman, who was crouching beside the fire, to the tent. The slave stood timidly before the mighty soldier.

"How long is it since Suomar bought you?"

"That's hard for Zercho to say. I can hardly count beyond the fingers of both hands, and there are more years than fingers. The little elf was very small then. My master got me cheap, for the Romans had dragged many, many of us as prisoners from the beautiful pastures of the Tibiscus. He exchanged a horse and a net full of fish for me with the dealer over in Vindonissa."

"Suomar has praised you to me. He has never been obliged to flog you."

Zercho made a wry face and rubbed his ear. "Yes, my lord — once."

"And why was that?"

"When I first saw the little elf—she was then a child about seven years old—I thought she was the wood maiden, red Vila, threw myself on the ground and shut my eyes; for whoever sees her is blinded. Then he shouted a word in your language which I have often heard since,—it means an animal with horns,—and struck me. But never afterwards." The slave had uttered all this very rapidly; he was afraid of the Duke, and kept on talking to deaden his fear.

"You are faithful to the young girl?"

"I would be cut to pieces with the ploughshare for her."

"You plucked me by the cloak when you made your report in the presence of the Adeling and the old woman. You wished to tell me something that they ought not to know."

"That is true, great Father! How did you discover—?"

"That was not hard to guess. But I suspect more—the girl did not become the captive of the kindhearted chatterer, Ausonius, but of another Roman."

The slave looked up at him in fright. "Did

your Odin, your terrible god who knows all things, reveal this to you?"

"No, he only gave me the power of reading men's eyes. So she is another's prisoner; I suspected it. And you did not wish to plunge into still deeper grief both the old grandmother and the Adeling; for he loves the child ardently."

"You know that too?"

"One doesn't need Odin's assistance for it," replied the Duke, smiling. "I was young once too. You wished to spare the youth?"

"Yes, great Father. He would wear himself out with rage and grief. Yet he can do nothing to save her."

"He would only destroy himself, and perhaps our best hope of victory, by some desperate deed. I am pleased with you, slave. Keep silence as before. But Ausonius was there too?"

"Yes, the foreigner who stayed so long in Arbor several years ago. But he didn't seize the child; it was another, younger man."

"Did you not hear his name? Was it anything like Saturninus?"

"My lord, his name was not spoken, or I

did not hear it. He was a fine-looking man in glittering armor."

"But he took his prisoner to Ausonius?"

"Yes. Yet he did not lift her on Ausonius's white horse, as the latter seemed to ask, but swung the struggling girl upon another — a black one — perhaps, yes, probably his own."

The Duke remained silent and thoughtful. At last he said: "The Adeling is not to reach the Roman camp until twilight is closing in to-morrow. Before he rides forth he will receive some directions from me. Tell him so. And" — here he lowered his voice to a whisper, much to the surprise of the slave, since there was no one in the tent — "if a faithful and cunning man should venture to introduce himself or some one else in disguise into the hostile camp and tell me what he saw there, — for I fear they will not give Adalo much chance to look about him, — and this man should be a slave, I would buy his freedom."

"Great Father!" exclaimed the Sarmatian, throwing himself prostrate before the Duke and trying to kiss his feet.

The old man angrily thrust him back with

the handle of his spear: "Are you a dog, that you want to lick my feet?"

"Zercho is a Jazyge," said the bondman, rising and rubbing his bruised shins. "Thus my people honor one who is worthy of honor."

"But we sons of the Ases do not bend the knee even to the mighty King of Asgard when we call upon him and desire to honor him. Now go. Perhaps it will be well that Adalo should not know what is to happen."

"He must not hear of it until after it has succeeded, for he would not let the others whom I must have go with me."

"I do not wish to know in advance how the work is to be done. Say outside that no one is to enter till I strike the shield."

The slave had scarcely gone when the Duke drew back the linen curtain whose folds fell to the ground behind him, shutting off the rear of the tent, used as a sleeping-room.

A man with long gray hair, scarcely younger than Hariowald, came forward glancing cautiously around him.

"We are alone, Ebarvin. Repeat your King's words exactly again. For consider, you must repeat them to his face, on oath, be-

fore the assembly of the people, if he deny them."

"He will not deny them," said the gray-beard sorrowfully. "He is too proud to submit to you, but he is also too proud to lie."

"It is a pity," replied the Duke, curtly. "He was a fearless man."

"You speak as if he were numbered with the dead!" cried the other, shuddering.

"I do not see how he can survive. Or, do you believe he will change his choice?"

Ebarvin silently shook his head.

"How long have you borne his shield?"

"Ever since he *had* a shield. I carried his father's, too," sighed the man.

"I know it, Ebarvin. And," he asked craftily, as if in reproach, while his gray eye blazed with a searching light, "and yet you betrayed him?"

The man gripped his short sword angrily.

"Betray? I accuse him openly, after I have often warned him loyally, after threatening that I would tell you all. He laughed at it; he would not believe me."

"And why do you do it? You have loved him."

"Why? And you ask that — you, who taught it to me, to us all? True, it was not you alone — first necessity! Why? Because only this league of the Alemanni can save us from ruin, from the shame of bondage. Why? Oh, Duke, the oaths with which you bound us years ago, before the ash of Odin, are terrible. Ebarvin will not forswear himself; I will not, a perjured man, drift through endless nights down the horrible river of Hel among corpses, serpents, and swords. And I have learned through a long life that we must stand together, or the Romans will destroy us province by province. Oh, I would slay my own son if, disobedient to the Duke and the Council of the people, he tried to burst our league asunder."

Up sprang the old chieftain; his eye flashed with delight. Raising the spear aloft with his left hand, he struck the right one on the clansman's shoulder: "I thank you for those words, Ebarvin! And I thank thee, thou Mighty One in the clouds! If such a spirit lives in the Alemanni, the league will never be sundered."

CHAPTER XXII.

IT was really as Zercho the bondman had believed: Bissula had become the captive, not of Ausonius, but another; and his captive she remained. To the extreme surprise, nay, barely repressed indignation of the Prefect of Gaul, the younger man had asserted his claim according to the rights of war. Ausonius had no claims whatever to the prisoner; that was clear. His nephew undoubtedly might have raised them, and at first he did make the attempt. But he grew strangely silent when the Tribune—scarcely in absolute harmony with the truth—said in his uncle's presence: "The girl had escaped again. I was the first to catch her finally. Shall I call her, that she may tell you the whole story herself?"

Herculanus, with a venomous glance, left the tent.

But Ausonius did not understand the imperious rudeness of the brave soldier who was usually so devoted to him. When the Tribune

curtly appealed to the right of war, Ausonius, deeply offended, pondered over all the reasons which, as he thought, must induce his friend not to yield his legal right in this instance to him. The poet, seeking motives for the act, of course first grasped the nearest: all the men in the camp gazed at the peculiar beauty of the child with unconcealed admiration. It was no wonder then that the Illyrian, in the full vigor of manhood, should also be seized with ardent love for the beautiful creature who had fallen into his hands and, without really having any evil design, wanted to keep her in his power until either from affection or obedience the captive should yield to her master.

But this anxiety, which at first had weighed heavily upon him, was soon relieved. With the keen distrust of jealousy, he watched his rival sharply at every meeting; but even suspicion could discover nothing that would have warranted this conjecture. Quiet, unmoved, and steadfast as ever was the Tribune's bearing in her presence, which he neither shunned nor sought, but treated with indifference. He looked into the wonderful eyes no more frequently than occasion required, and his glance

was calm, his voice did not tremble. So Ausonius regarded his friend's act as a soldier's strange whim, and did not doubt that he would soon give it up. But this proved an error.

On returning to the camp Ausonius entreated his friend, without renouncing his right of possession, to place the young girl in the tent next to the Prefect's, now occupied by slaves and freedwomen, whom he would remove. But Saturninus insisted that Bissula should be lodged among the wives of the freedmen and female slaves who occupied some tents a long distance from the Prefect's. The young girl herself paid little heed to the discussion between the two Romans, whose meaning she scarcely understood.

Released by the Tribune from the fear of death, and soothed by the presence of her honored friend, her young cheerful heart soon accommodated itself to the new condition of affairs,—not through recklessness, but through childish ignorance of the perils which possibly threatened her. Her grandmother was not discovered; her faithful servant had not been captured; she herself was certainly secure in the presence and under the eyes of her friend, the

most aristocratic man in the Roman camp. He would not let a hair of her head be harmed, she knew.

True, the thought weighed heavily upon her heart as soon as she was captured that she herself was solely to blame for her misfortune. If she had obeyed the well-meant counsel — she was on the verge of tears; experience had taught the value of the advice — she would now have been safe and sheltered with her grandmother, though also with Adalo. And owing him a debt of gratitude! She crushed the tears on her long lashes. No, she would not admit that he was right. Now she owed the haughty Adeling nothing: that was certainly an advantage. "And" — she shook her waving locks back defiantly — "they won't eat me here! Only don't be afraid, Bissula," she said to herself; "and don't submit to anything!"

She had trembled only a moment after her escape from Herculanus, when her powerful deliverer measured her whole dainty figure with a look under which she lowered her eyes in confusion. But when she again raised those innocent child-eyes, the expression had vanished. And it never returned.

Her master allowed her to spend the whole day with her "Father Ausonius": only when it grew dark he appeared, with inexorable firmness, to take her away; and he went with her himself to the tent assigned to her, before which he stationed one of his Illyrian countrymen as a sentinel all night.

Bissula never saw her friend's nephew, whom she feared, alone. She confidently expected the restoration of her liberty when the camp should be broken up and the Romans should withdraw from the country. There would be no fighting, Ausonius repeatedly told her. So the light-hearted girl regarded her captivity, which had lost all its terrors, as an adventure that afforded her an opportunity for the conversations with her friend which she had missed so long.

Many of her young playmates had lived as hostages and probably as captives in Roman camps and in the fortresses on the southern shore, and been restored to liberty uninjured when truce or peace was declared. That she could be detained or carried away against her will she did not fear: the most powerful man in the camp was her protector. Yet this peril

constantly threatened her more and more closely.

Ausonius kept a sort of diary, in which before going to sleep he recorded events, impressions, sketches of poems, and short bits of verse — a custom whose regular observance he scarcely omitted even in camp. A touch of pedantry was one of his characteristics. Yet the diary was not a monologue, rather a sort of dialogue; for he addressed it in the form of a letter to his oldest and most intimate friend, Arius Paulus of Bigerri, rhetorician, but also an old soldier. Every three months he collected what he had written and forwarded it to him to receive his criticisms and answers on the margin of the manuscript when returned.

So, during these days of involuntary leisure he wrote.

CHAPTER XXIII.

V. BEFORE THE KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER.

AUSONIUS sends greetings to his Paulus.

I wrote to you yesterday about the charming Barbarian child. Child? She is one no longer. The delicate, yet lovely outlines of her form have developed into exquisite roundness. And Barbarian? If she ever was one she has ceased to be so, since Ausonius taught her the pomp of the Latin language. How shall I describe her to you without drawing, no, painting her? For it is precisely the charm of her coloring that is so peerless. If only I had brought with me Paralos, my Ionian slave, who painted the nymphs so exquisitely — you know — in my little dining hall yonder, in the villa in the Province Noverus! And the expression — the vivacity — in those ever varying features, now full of mischievous wrath, now mirth, now jest, and anon of a sorrowful yearning which to me is full of mystery.

And the dainty figure! Recently her leather

sandals stuck fast in the mire outside the camp ditch. How white and charming were the little feet! How can they even support the figure, lightly as it floats along? The muse which so long has shunned me has again returned in the form of this Suabian girl: a fairer metamorphosis than ever Ovid dreamed. Verses well up in my mind ceaselessly. Just listen!

"Nature had dowered Bissula with charms which the greatest of artists
Vainly to picture would strive. Doubtless to full many another
Justice he might do by use of the pigments of red and of white lead:
Coloring like hers, alas! will forever escape him, unless he should paint
Her face with a lily's lustre, on which the breath of a rose hath rested."

Ah, my friend, with the feelings that come to me, I am often ashamed of the half century I bear with me. Fain would I sacrifice something to Anteros — most willingly my gray hairs!

A short time ago the little maid amazed us all (Saturninus was even more surprised than I; for I am already beginning to believe her almost supernatural) by showing strategic insight. It was mentioned that while making a tour on

the southwestern wall I had saved her little hut from burning, while our cohorts usually flung the torch with eager zeal into the wooden houses of the Barbarians. Then Saturninus remarked that by accident another building had been spared, a house with a lofty gable roof rising on a hill farther toward the southwest. None of our reconnoitring parties had marched in that direction. My nephew called one of his men and ordered two of them to ride over the next day and burn the dwelling down.

Suddenly the girl, with flashing eyes, cried: "How stupid!" and laughed. Courtesy is not her favorite virtue, and she and my nephew waste little love on each other. "How stupid!" she repeated. "The building is very solid, the fence inclosing it very high; it is almost a citadel like your camp here; and it is between you and the lake — to which you must fly if my people come. You could fortify yourselves there again, if you are forced to leave here as the fox darts from its burrow."

Herculanus laughed sneeringly; but Saturninus cast a glance from the top of the wall to that hill and the lofty building, and said in the quiet tone which quells contradiction: "I my-

self had resolved to have the dwelling burned to-morrow. But the child is right. The solid house will not be burned, but perhaps, later, occupied — when the ships arrive."

If those ships would only come! The eager Tribune is fairly consumed with impatience for action. Already he has gone across the lake repeatedly in a wretched rotting boat belonging to the Barbarians, which we found hidden among the thickest growth of rushes near Bissula's hut, and urged Nannienus to hasten. But the latter might truthfully say with Homer: "Why dost thou urge one who is willing?" We cannot make up in days for the neglect of months. The Emperor's own miserable officials do him more harm than the Barbarians. And we do not even know where these strange defenders of the country have vanished.

Ah, that reminds me of another anecdote of the little maid. How constantly she steals into my thoughts! Of course — in jest and earnest — we have tried to obtain information about the hiding-places of the enemy from the only captive of whose possession hitherto we can boast; but there we "victors" met with small success, as you may guess.

"Where are your heroes hiding?" I asked once laughing, toward the end of a meal in my tent. "Truly, their heroism is as hard to find as themselves."

"They will hardly have told this little maid," replied Saturninus. "For Barbarian women can probably keep secrets no better than Roman ones. She does not know."

"Yes, she does!" cried the rogue, pouting defiantly.

"Indeed? Then we'll question you," I cried, "on the rack."

"That isn't necessary. I am willing to tell."

"Well, where are they?" asked the Tribune seriously.

She glided out of the tent, thrust her head saucily through the opening, and laughed mischievously: "They dwell with Odin and the nixie in the lake. Search for them there yourself!" And she vanished.

Her favorite resting-place is at the foot of a huge pine-tree; it is sacred, dedicated to a German goddess who, according to the description, probably corresponds with Isis. I have repeatedly found her there. Once she was swinging among the branches like a little bird.

She begged me not to betray her hiding-place to the others — the Tribune and my nephew. She often liked to dream there all alone. Well, I certainly shall not betray her. If *I* know where to look for her, the others shall not find her against her will.

IV. BEFORE THE KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER.

I regretted the artist's absence a short time since, and cannot get him to come here. But perhaps Bissula will go later to the artist, to Burdigala. How I wished it long ago! Oh, Paulus, if only I could show her to you! The more I write of her and think of her, the more she pleases me. Or perhaps the contrary is the case. I will write and think of her no more.

. . . . . .

You will not believe, my dear friend, how much I enjoy the military life I have not witnessed for so long. I understand little about it, but the pomp and pride and power of war stir me very strongly.

It is a pleasure to see the rule of a man like Saturninus. He cannot scan a verse of Alcæus, but he knows how to arrange a camp according to the demands and advantages of the loca-

tion, better than I can write an Alcæan strophe. Here, on this steep hillside in the midst of the Barbarian forests, he had applied Frontinus's rules to the given space most admirably. It would please an old soldier like you to see our camp, the strength of wall and moat, the arrangement of the spaces between the tents, the distribution of horse and foot-soldiers, luggage, and camp followers.

III. BEFORE THE KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER.

And why should you not see it? For what purpose has Athene or the clever Phœnicians taught us the art of writing? I begged Saturninus to dictate to his fat slave scribe a sketch of our whole camp, with all the points important for defence and the distribution of our troops. I will put it on the papyrus.

How stately is the entrance! Four squadrons of mailed warriors at the Porta Decumana, and all the baggage also piled up there. The wall eight feet high; the ditch five feet deep. The weakest point is the northwest corner, so the best troops are there: Batavian and spearmen of the Emperor's Thracian Guard: etc.

I will not repeat here in detail what the

inclosure will contain; but the paper is not yet finished. He has taken it away to make the drawing more accurate.

II. BEFORE THE KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER.

Ah, what avails dissimulation, playing hide and seek with myself? If you drive her out with a pitchfork, Nature will always return, says the Bandusian fellow. I am trying to make you — and myself — believe that my thoughts are on ditch and wall and mailed soldiers. It is not true. I think only of the little maid. Her image alone hovers before my eyes day and night. It is already half decided that you shall see her.

When this expedition is over, I at any rate shall return to Gaul, perhaps the whole army; for the Emperor Valens seems to be able to deal with the Goths without needing our aid; he does not ask for us. Then I can take the little maid as my guest for a short visit to Burdigala.

True, she is still considered the Tribune's slave. It is an odd caprice of the valiant soldier. No, no, my Paulus! It is not what you suppose that influences him. I have watched him

suspiciously, almost jealously, as sharply as a father — or can it be a lover? But I did him injustice — or too much honor? He has nothing in his head except those invisible Alemanni and our ships, still delayed at Arbor.

. . . . . .

Yet why only for a visit? Why should she not remain in my house always to beautify my advancing years with the roseate dawn of her youth?

Yes. Eos, Aurora: it is a fitting symbol for her. So young, so full of the dewy freshness of the morning, with her ruddy curling locks floating saucily around her.

Perhaps, now that she has grown more sensible, she will joyfully accept the offer I made when she was a child: to go with me as my adopted daughter.— Daughter? That is not the right word; no longer the right word: she has blossomed into womanhood; I should not think of lifting her on my knee, as I did years ago. She has become too mature.

And I am still too young to regard her only as a daughter.— Rather as a brother, her loving brother who rejoices in her beauty. No, it will not do.

A short time ago her round arm brushed me (the German women go with bare arms); a fiery thrill darted through my veins. I can scarcely doubt it, I —

My feelings for her do not concern other people. I might at any rate first take her with me — and then adopt her? No matter what the legal form may be, I am determined to keep her near me always.

I can no longer do without her charming presence; everything would grow dark and cold. Already I shiver at the thought of again living alone with the icy-hearted Herculanus.

She has become my muse! A barbarian one, do you scoff? Aha, are these lines so barbaric?

"Incarnate joy! Caressing bliss! O thou embodiment of sportive grace!
How the Barbarian maid the fair ones of Latium hath vanquished!
Bissula! Plebeian her name may sound in the ears of aliens:
But to Ausonius it echoes with harmonies sweet and bewitching."

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT is useless to conceal it from myself any longer, and what I admit to myself must also be confessed to you, my Paulus, my second self, at the same moment. Alas, I fear you read it long ago from these words in prose and verse.

I beseech you not to shake your cool, cautious head as usual over your "too youthful" Ausonius: I hope my heart will throb warmly till it ceases to beat.

I know all you will say — of course against it. For you would speak in favor only if you had seen her. Yet I rejoice that you are not here: I have no desire to be warned.

True, it is one thing to toy with the sweet illusion within my own breast and to the friend who will keep my secret; and quite another to transfer it to practical reality.

My thoughts are contradictory. I am fifty — ah no; fifty-two years old! But what happiness it will be for the young girl to share not only my wealth but the whole Latin civilization with

me! She is a pagan. Pshaw! The baptismal water will no more wash away her charm than it has driven the pagan Muses from me. She can believe after baptism precisely what she believed before. And she shall offer sacrifices to golden Aphrodite and to Hymen!

I hesitate. She is very fond of me, but I often find her dreaming, gazing out with yearning eyes beyond the walls of the camp: strangely enough, it is not eastward in the direction of her home, but always toward the northwest. At that point the wall rises almost to the height of her huge pine tree, whose branches reach the ground: I again found her hidden among them yesterday. She climbs so far up among the boughs that she can look over the wall to the distant hills, and hides among the dense foliage like a martin.

I discovered her with much difficulty,—twilight was gathering,—and when at my call she slipped down I thought I saw tears in her eyes. But the crimson glow of sunset had probably dazzled me; I did not see them when she stood on the ground by my side, though she looked graver than usual.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"Liberty," was her swift answer.

Perhaps I looked perplexed or angry, for she went on hastily: "Forgive me! I was foolish. I know that if you set me free now, before the close of the war, I might fall into the hands of other Romans before reaching my people. And I am not ungrateful. How kind you are to me! Yet I often feel so homesick — for — for — oh, I don't know myself!"

Then I said in jest, — for never before, and even now not seriously, had the idea entered my mind, — "For a lover?"

She started back like a little red serpent. I have never seen her so angry, though the hot temper of the little creature boils over often enough. She stamped her tiny foot, the blood crimsoned her cheeks, and she vehemently exclaimed:

"A lover? The 'red biting cat'? I have no heart! How should *I* love?"

Then turning her back on me defiantly she ran off to her tent and did not appear again that evening. But I am glad to learn from her own lips that no bond of affection will hold her fast in this Barbarian land, if I really decide to take her with me to Burdigala.

This possible obstacle to my wishes entered my thoughts rather late, you will tell me. But it was because I considered her a child so long. Later I daily felt in my own heart the feeling within growing stronger. No, no, this girl is a child no longer, but a maiden ready for her bridal.

The sweet wish — I scarcely repress it — is rapidly maturing. And with this dear girl I shall be sure of one thing: she will not marry me for my wealth, which I anxiously fear from our Gallic maidens. As to the widows, I feel gripes in my stomach whenever I think of them.

I will be cautious not to startle the timid child; for how can the Barbarian maiden dream of such an honor as even being invited as my guest to Burdigala? It is inconceivable that she should refuse: now that she has grown to womanhood. If she does, then — But no, surely it will not be necessary. And when she has once tasted the rich, beautiful life there, she will no longer desire to return to this wilderness. Then ere long I can read aloud to her these verses which now I dare entrust only to my friend:

"Bissula, fair maid born and reared in the cold land beyond
the Rhine,
Bissula, who bloomed so near the source of the Danube:
Captive of war, thou hast, when released from bondage,
made captive
Thy conqueror: his heart became the prisoner's booty.
Of a mother's care bereft, ne'er hast thou suffered a mis-
tress:
When thou a captive wast made, a mistress thou didst
become,
Though thou by Roman favor, O German, wast thus
transformed.
Still hast thou thine eyes' deep azure, still hast thou thy
hair's red gold.
Dual thou seemest now, and with dual charms adorn
Latium's tongue thy mind, and Suabia's grace thy form."

How do you like them, my dear friend? I hope they are not bad. At least they please *me* extremely, and you know I am not vain.

Now imagine how these melodious lines must gratify her — her who is their inspiration.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE morning after Ausonius had made this last entry in his diary, Bissula, as usual, shared the first meal in his tent with the uncle and nephew. The Prefect of Gaul was in excellent spirits, often jested, talked a great deal, had his goblet repeatedly filled by the slave who was his cup-bearer, and remarked again that the campaign would soon be over. "When the ships come," he added in conclusion, "the Barbarians will sue for peace." Glancing up merrily his eyes chanced to rest on the young girl's face. To his surprise a mocking, nay, angry smile was hovering around lips pouting in defiance; her brow was frowning, and she made no reply. The conversation flagged. Herculanus watched the rising cloud sharply, and eagerly fanned the flame.

"What?" he cried. "Peace? Bondage; extirpation! The Cæsar will soon drag the last remaining Alemanni before his triumphal chariot to the Capitol: the leaders will be stran-

gled, the rest sold cheap: a German for a cabbage."

Tears of rage filled Bissula's eyes. She could find no words; fury choked her voice. She searched her thoughts, her memory, for aid and defence. Adalo was the only name which came to her. "Yes, Adalo, if you were here, or if I had your swift speech, whispered by Odin! Stay — his verse — his verse of defiance. How did it run?" She closed her eyes to think, resting her elbows on the table, with both little clenched hands pressed against her throbbing brow.

"I will offer a toast," Herculanus went on, raising his goblet; "pledge me. You, the pupil of Ausonius, are surely one of us: Disgrace and death to the Alemanni!" Bissula sprang up. Her blue eyes were blazing; her red tresses fluttered around her head; a blow from her clenched fist sent the silver goblet rattling on the floor; and, in the language of her people, she cried loudly:

"Woe to the Latins!
Vengeance on Romans!
Break down their castles,
Shatter their strongholds,

Swing ye the sword
Till the base robbers flee!
All this region
Hath Odin given
To his sons of victory —
To us, the Alemanni!

"Oh, I thank you, I thank you, Adalo!" And she rushed out of the tent.

"How foolish!" Ausonius said reproachfully to his nephew. "How inhospitable! How could you so incense our guest?"

"Guest? Our, that is, the Illyrian's, slave-girl. But forgive me, uncle. It shall not happen again. How little a Barbarian woman suits the society of Romans! Our thoughts, our wishes — she is implacably hostile to all. And Adalo? I have already heard the name. Isn't it —?"

"No matter who it is," thundered the uncle. "But you are my nephew, and have insulted, roused the lovely girl to furious rage at my table, in my tent. How would you in Burdigala —"

A gloomy, significant glance from the young Roman checked his thoughtless speech.

"You must appease her. Now leave me; I

don't wish to see you again to-day. Or stay — I will follow her myself. Poor little thing!"

Ausonius rose excitedly from the couch and hurried out. Herculanus and the slave who acted as cup-bearer remained alone in the tent.

"Is it so already?" muttered the former angrily through his set teeth. "Does the childish infatuated old fool reveal his plans so openly? To work, Davus! Well or ill — to work! Have you the hemlock? Have you enough?"

"I think it will do. If it fail the first time, you still have some in the other little vial?" Herculanus nodded. The slave went on:

"He complained yesterday of all sorts of bad feelings. I'll risk it soon, before he gets well again. But — one thing more — the Barbarian girl will sleep alone to-night."

"What? Not in the tent with the teamsters' wives?"

"No; a contagious eruption broke out there last night: I heard Saturninus give the order to pitch another tent at once on the opposite side for the prisoner."

"But he will have her closely guarded."

"To-night he is going on a reconnoitring expedition with all his incorruptible Illyrians.

Batavians are to be on duty: they are fond of drinking; perhaps—"

"Silence! This ring as a reward for the news. We don't yet know whether the plot against the old man will succeed, so we'll have two strings ready for our bow. And I hate her. I don't hate him; only I must have my inheritance quickly. So to-night! Hush, Prosper is coming! About the poison—in the two little vials—we'll say more later; you know where and when. First we'll wait to see what this night will bring forth."

. . . . . .

Meanwhile kind-hearted Ausonius had vainly sought the angry fugitive. He looked eagerly down the long wide streets of the camp which crossed in a square at the prætorium—in vain. Now he hoped to find her in her favorite hiding-place, the secluded spot with the tall fir-tree; but it was empty. Nor was she perched among the branches: he scanned them carefully.

Shaking his head he walked on still farther toward the northwest, to the wall itself. Here he heard voices raised as if disputing, a soldier's and Bissula's. Now he saw Rignomer, the

Batavian sentry, with lowered spear forcing back the slowly retreating girl. The man spoke half in German, half in vulgar Latin; for at that time the Batavians and Alemanni, though both Germans, found it as hard to understand one another as the sailors of the Lower Rhine and the peasants of Lake Constance do at the present day.

"Back, you red elf, you beautiful Idise, you nymph, and never try it again! It would be a pity to hurt yourself. The wall is too high and the ditch too deep—" Then the soldier recognized the Prefect, saluted him, and went back to the top of the wall.

Bissula, noticing the respectful salute, had turned and, still violently agitated, rushed to Ausonius, exclaiming: "Father, set me free at once! at once!"

Ausonius shook his head. "Consider—"

"If you really catch defenceless girls and threaten to kill them by the sword, you glorious Romans, as your nephew—"

"When did he do that?"

"Never mind! Send me with a safe escort, with a letter from you beyond your outposts."

"Where shall I send you?"

Bissula remained silent a short time. Her face was deeply flushed.

"Where? To the place where you always gaze in your reveries? Out yonder?"

"No," she replied, setting her teeth; "eastward, to my home. Then I will take care of myself."

"Child, you must stay till the war is over."

"No, I must go," she answered. "I belong to my people, not to you. It is not right, it is abominable, for me to sleep safe here in your protection, drink Roman wine from golden goblets, while my kindred are suffering want and danger. Let me go!" She raised her hand. The gesture was meant to be an entreaty, but it resembled a threat.

"Cease this folly, little one," Ausonius now said, more seriously. "My nephew's idle, unseemly words offended you; I reproved him for them; he will beg your pardon,'—Bissula made a contemptuous movement,—"and everything will be forgotten."

"Shall I forget my people?"

"Forget? No; but gradually become alienated from them. You look amazed. Well, let this trivial incident hasten the important dis-

closure I have to make. Are you thinking of leaving me? Give it up, sweet girl!" He controlled himself and went on more calmly: "My little daughter, you will never leave me again."

Bissula opened her eyes in the utmost astonishment, gazing at the Roman with the expression of a captured deer. The iron tramp of a marching cohort was heard close at hand, but the tents still concealed it from their gaze.

"What do you mean?" she stammered.

"I will tell you," said Ausonius in a firmer, sterner tone than he had ever used. The opposition he now suspected irritated him, and he was determined to execute his will. "I will tell you that I have resolved to fulfil my former plan. I shall take you as my guest for an indefinite time. As my little daughter," he added cautiously, "with me to Burdigala."

"Never!" cried Bissula, raising both arms in the wildest terror.

"Yes, most certainly."

"But I will not go. I — away from the lake — from — from my people? No, no, no!"

"Yes, yes, yes! This is not tyrannical nor cruel, as you think now."

"Who will compel me to go away?"

"I. We compel children whom we are educating to do what we desire, for their own good. You do not understand your real welfare: I will force you to do so."

"But I am no child; I am —" She advanced toward him defiantly.

"You are a captive. Do not forget that. You must obey your master, and he —"

"Is here," said a deep voice.

Saturninus stepped between them. With a firm hand he held Bissula, who had turned, reeled as though giddy, and tried again to scale the wall. "Do not forget that, Ausonius."

Angered by the interruption, perplexed, and half ashamed, the other drew back. "What are you doing?"

"I am protecting my captive."

"Against whom?"

"Against every threat: against wiles as well as compulsion — even though well meant."

Both gazed at him in silence, but the girl's gratitude was blended with a slight thrill of fear — fear of this protector too.

Ausonius was the first to find words. In tones which revealed wrath, jealousy, and sus-

picion, he exclaimed: "And who will protect her against you?"

"Nothing and no one, except my own will."

"Oh, set me free!" cried Bissula, raising her clasped hands despairingly to the Tribune.

"That you may tell the Barbarians all you have seen and heard in our camp? No, little maid. You will stay — perhaps forever. Have no thought of escape! Here, countryman!" He beckoned to a soldier. "Take her to the new tent; keep guard there until I leave to-night; then Rignomer the Batavian will relieve you. And listen: tell my scribe that during the day he must see that she —" The rest was whispered in the ear of the Illyrian, who led the wondering, bewildered girl away by the arm.

Ausonius and Saturninus parted without exchanging a single word: the latter saluted respectfully; but the angry Prefect did not, or would not, see the farewell.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EVER since the preceding day the rain clouds, which had so long densely veiled the mountain peaks and hung in gray curtains to the shore of the lake, had grown lighter and lighter. Scattered fragments still floated over the forest; but the mists were dispersing from Sentis and Tödi. And before the sun of that day sank behind the wooded heights of the western shore, it burst through the cloud rack for the first time in a long while, illumining lake and country for a few minutes with a blood-red glow. The fishes leaped greedily after the flies which were sunning themselves in the beams and flew feebly, with damp wings, close to the surface of the water: then the radiant ball disappeared behind the long cloud curtain.

The herons flew screaming from the rushes toward the land. The wind seemed to be rising. The clouds swept across the sky, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another. The waves of the lake, obeying the former course

of the wind, rolled in a direction opposite to the clouds above them.

The Batavian mercenaries of the Lower Rhine were encamped outside of the northern gate of the camp, the Porta Prætoria, but a little toward the west. The centurion, a man about forty years old, long in the service of Rome, who was adorned with neck-chains and various badges of honor on his breast-plate bestowed for gallant deeds, was fanning the smoking fire, which they were loath to have die out in the cold damp woods.

"There!" he muttered, "there it goes. I invoked both gods, Vulcan and Loki, in vain. Vulcan won't help me, because I am a Barbarian; Loki because I serve the Romans. We mercenaries no longer have any gods to aid us, because we belong to no nation."

"Ha, Rignomer," laughed another in the group, a youth whose downy red beard was just beginning to grow, "I care for only one god among them all — the god of victory."

"And he, Odin, is the very one who has deserted us, Brinno. Everywhere the Germans are conquering; that is, the peoples who are fighting against Rome, not we German

mercenaries, who battle for the Cæsar. And in every conflict the men who bleed are we mercenaries."

"Because these cunning Romans always put us in the place which is most severely threatened," Brinno cried angrily.

"Because Odin is hostile to us," whispered the centurion. "We must no longer fight for Rome against the other Germans. He no longer wills it.'

"What do you mean by Germans? That's a word like Barbarians. The Romans invented it, not we. What do I care for these Alemanni? I am a Batavian; a Frank, if you prefer the name."

"Yes, I do prefer it."

"It's newer."

"But stronger, because it is larger."

"What do I care, I ask again, for these thick-skulled Suabians? I can hardly understand what they say."

"But all we blue-eyed, yellow-haired men are sons of the dwellers in Asgard. We have all come here to the great waters from the East. So our forefathers teach us; so the harpers sing. And everywhere, on the Rhine and the

Danube, the districts and peoples who formerly had such bitter feuds are gathering. This is Odin's work. He is summoning the descendants of Asgard to war against Rome. This is my last campaign under the dragon standard. In a few days my time of service will expire; then I shall go home and till my land on the Issala, where my mother and my brother and sisters live; till it with a better plough, a Roman one. And if I must fight again, I will fight for my land, against Rome. We Franks have too little room down there in the swamps of the Rhine; we must go into beautiful Gaul."

"Well, this war of the Romans will soon be over. A bloodless victory."

"Who knows?" Here the centurion threw himself on the ground beside Brinno and whispered: "A man from my district, who formerly fought under the Emperor Valentinian by this lake against the Alemanni, told me why in fear and horror he suddenly gave up the service and lost his pay: In a battle the Romans were vanquished. *One* against whom no man can lift his hand without forfeiting salvation forever dashed forward on a gray charger at the head of the Alemanni wedge."

"What?" asked Brinno, half incredulously, half timidly: "*He* — he — himself?"

Rignomer nodded significantly: "In the form of a white-haired Duke; so runs the legend. When sore peril threatens the dwellers by the lake he descends from the heavenly heights, warns them, conceals them from the eyes of the foe with his dark mantle of clouds; teaches them runes of victory on inaccessible mountains, and bears them suddenly away on the eagle wings of the tempest. Against him I will not fight. I vowed to serve the Imperator against men only. But hark! a tuba signal from our outposts. Whom are our mounted men bringing in?"

"A messenger from the Alemanni, it seems."

"Yes, a leader and two attendants. What a youth! Halt, young hero: if you wish to go into the camp to the General,— only one is permitted to ride in,— I must first cover your eyes. Dismount! You will not? Well then, turn back again."

This was a severe blow to Adalo's hopes. He would so gladly have gazed keenly about him in the Roman camp, scanned ditches, walls, gates, and — two persons within that

frowning palisade. He sullenly dismounted. A thick woollen blanket was thrown in loose folds over his head like a huge sack and fastened under his chin: Rignomer took him by the hand and guided him to the gate, where a centurion of the Thracians received the Barbarians' envoy.

Adalo's two companions also dismounted, tied the three horses to the nearest trees, and soon lay chatting with the Batavians. The bad Latin of the frontier, it is true, often had to aid the understanding of the different dialects around the watchfire. With great exertion it had now been rekindled, for it was growing very dark. Suddenly, from the forest path by which the envoys had come, a strange growling was heard which drew nearer and nearer. The whole group, including the two Alemanni, started up in surprise.

"A bear?"

"So near the fire?"

"Slipped through our outposts?"

They seized the spears which stood stacked together. Then a Batavian, laughing loudly, came around the bend of the narrow path, pointing behind him. "Look, comrades! A

Sarmatian juggler with a tame she-bear! She dances to his big flute! It's very comical."

A cry of surprise escaped the lips of one of the Alemanni, whose eyes and mouth opened in astonishment: "That's surely—"

But his companion gave him a violent dig in the ribs with his elbow: "A she-bear! Yes. Didn't you ever see one?"

A man in the Sarmatian costume—black sheepskin with the wool turned inside—now stepped into the firelight, leading by a leather thong a large she-bear. Behind him, also clad in sheepskin, limped his boy, probably carrying in his bundle provisions for their journey; he was a poor cripple, who made his way forward slowly with the help of a crutch, and doubtless found it hard either to stand or to walk; for when the third Batavian, shoving him with the handle of his spear, invited him to come nearer to the fire, the poor lad, with a low cry, fell on the grass.

The soldiers, with Roman and German taunts, asked what *he* could do. He did not stir.

"You can talk to him a long while," said his master, laughing. "The boy is deaf, and

he is sick with fever. He is afraid of people. Let him lie there!"

The lad crept under the thickest underbrush, far away from the flames. He could scarcely be seen from the watchfire; all that was visible was his coal-black curly hair. Taking out a little earthen pot, he poured a few drops of some liquid on his lame foot and rubbed it with his hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TO Adalo's impatience the time seemed very long — in his wrath he believed the delay intentional — during which he was led through the spacious camp till at last his guide stopped and removed the muffler from his head. He found himself in the Prefect's tent. Ausonius, Bissula's friend, he instantly recognized, with a thrill of anger. A number of other army leaders were standing and sitting around him. They had had plenty of time to assemble while the Barbarian was being guided in bewildering zigzag lines through the streets of tents.

He silently saluted Ausonius (it did not escape his eyes that his foe looked admiringly at him), who motioned to him to sit down on a camp stool. But the youth, with a defiant bearing, remained standing. In vain, gazing around the richly decorated space, Adalo endeavored to discover some trace, not of Bissula herself — that was beyond his hopes — but of some garment or article that belonged to her.

Nothing was to be seen except arms and papyrus rolls.

"You understand the language of Rome, since you have come without an interpreter?" Ausonius began.

Adalo nodded.

"Be welcome! We expected such a messenger. You desire peace?"

The young hero angrily flung back his handsome head so that his long locks rested on his shoulders, and answered with flashing eyes: "I offer to let you depart unmolested."

"Ha, insolent Barbarian!" cried Herculanus.

But Saturninus wrathfully motioned to him to keep silence, and then asked very quietly: "Are we surrounded?"

"Not yet; but only because we did not desire it."

Saturninus cast a significant glance at the Prefect.

"Boasting!" replied the latter in Greek.

"And why haven't you destroyed us yet?" sneered Herculanus.

"The result, Roman, is in the hands of the gods. We have not attacked because we, who

do not fear battle, but rather — you know well — love it, this time desire peace; or our wise leaders, who think further than my comrades, desire it. The great league of the Alemanni wishes to end forever by a treaty not only this campaign but the whole war with you, which for generations has been burning or at least smouldering: we wish not a truce, but peace with Rome."

"Is this your idea, youth?" asked Saturninus, searchingly.

"I have already said it is the choice of our wise leaders, among whom I am not numbered. But I, too, perceive that intercourse with you across the frontiers, when the spears are leaning in the hall, will bring to our people many benefits. We have already learned much from watching you; we must learn still more."

"But why," interposed Ausonius, "if you perceive this, have you for centuries broken every armistice, every treaty? You Germans boast of fidelity as one of the virtues of your race, and we must praise the loyal service of your mercenaries under our standards. Why, here on the frontiers, are all your tribes of many names, Alemanni and Franks, Goths

and Quadi and Marcomanni, the same in this unfaithfulness? Why, year after year, do you continually break peace and compact? Our cohorts, constantly compelled to wade through your forest marshes, upbraid you with fierce hatred as the falsest of the peoples. Why do you continually break over our frontiers, like a forest stream?"

"Like a forest stream! You have uttered the right words, though probably without knowing it. I will not answer that often we are not the breakers of the treaties, but, perhaps against the Emperor's will, your army leaders, your frontier officials. In defiance of the treaty they build citadels on our free land, and the supplies which, according to the treaties, you owe us, are withheld: especially the grain."

"Why," asked Saturninus eagerly, rising from his seat, "do you not raise for yourselves the grain you need?'

"We cannot. There is not land enough for our increasing population. The gods multiply our numbers wonderfully: it must be their will that we should grow and overflow our boundaries. Hundreds, nay, thousands of our young men emigrate every year to serve you as mer-

cenaries and frontier guards. We often send forth a third of our young people, chosen by lot, to seek a new home where the flight of the birds and the will of the gods directs them: but all this does not avail."

"Then," Saturninus questioned, speaking more to himself than to the envoy, "it is not mere wantonness?"

"Do you think that mere wantonness would have driven, from the days of our earliest ancestors (the legends have treasured it loyally, sadly, and proudly) our almost naked heroes upon the spears of your mailed legions? Nay, had it been we youths only, we would always rather win what we need by blood — the foe's or our own — than by toiling with the plough. But do you believe that, from mere wantonness, whole nations, with their women and children, their men and maid-servants, their herds and wagons, would constantly press across your frontiers southward and westward; not as a war-like band on a foray in quest of booty, but on a weary pilgrimage, pressing forward because pressed by others, pushing because being pushed from the south and the east by other Germans and by Sarmatians; not quitting the old home,

but maintaining it by those left behind till they too were obliged to yield — do you believe that mere wantonness has so often lured these hundreds of thousands to and beyond your frontiers, usually to certain destruction? Oh, no. It is not wantonness that impels us, but the most powerful of all the goddesses — Necessity. A man utters her name unwillingly; for the woman with the iron girdle is the only inexorable deity; she is the mother of the three Fates, who also revere her, and she often strangles with her iron girdle the mortals who mention her carelessly. Beware, Romans! Before our faces stands only your Empire, one mighty in military power, it is true, but behind us threatens and urges the terrible mother of the Norns. We have no choice. The country has become too narrow; we must, come what may, pour out of the old bed in roaring torrents. Therefore, clever Roman, you speak aptly of a forest stream. Believe me: we shall continually break over your frontiers, no matter how strongly they may be guarded with men and walls, until either all we countless German tribes are destroyed or until we have gained land enough to live upon. Not until then will there be peace."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE words uttered by Adalo, evidently from sincere belief, and with warm feeling, produced a deep impression. Herculanus shrugged his shoulders scornfully. Saturninus, with a grave face, gazed silently into vacancy — into the future. After a long pause, Ausonius found words:

"I have never seen that side of the question. Is this your wisdom?"

"I say once more, it is the wisdom of our wise men; Duke Hariowald taught me. But the necessity of our people cries so loudly that even an inexperienced youth must understand its call: Land or destruction! So, in the name of our whole league of peoples, I ask (we Alemanni yield in courage to no race on earth), do you wish to gain us, our spears, forever against all your enemies, especially the false Franks, our evil neighbors and yours? Do you desire that?"

The Romans listened intently; no one interrupted him in his appeal.

"Well, there is a way, but only one." He paused.

"Speak," urged Saturninus eagerly.

"Vacate all the land which you still occupy but can hold only by constant fighting, the country northward between this lake and the right bank of the Rhine to where the Main empties into it beneath your stronghold of Mogontiacum, and all the region south of the lake to the chain of the Cisalpine region."

"Insolent fellow!" shouted Herculanus. The other army leaders also did not spare words of wrath. "Not bad!" said Ausonius, smiling. Saturninus alone was silent; he was thinking how the great military hero, Aurelian, had given up, in a manner very similar to the way asked here, Trajan's proud conquest, Dacia, and thereby, for a long time, pacified the Goths on the Danube.

But Adalo continued: "Do it, do it half voluntarily; do it for the most valuable compensation; for I tell you, it must be done very soon. Then it will be exacted without compensation in return. Do it willingly; for there is a proud prediction current among our people: the Alemanni will some day pasture their

horses from the snows of the Alps to the woods of the Vosges."

Ausonius rose indignantly. "Not another word! For our sole answer take to your people the old Roman war-cry, 'Woe to the Barbarians!'"

"Woe to the Barbarians!" repeated the army leaders, with loud shouts.

"Before I go," said the youth,—he struggled fiercely to subdue the agitation, the terrible anxiety which now sent a tremor through every limb,—"listen to another message. You have captured a daughter of our people." Six eyes were bent upon him with the keenest attention. "I am commissioned to ransom her." In spite of every effort to appear calm and cold his voice trembled.

"Are you Bissula's relative? She has no brother," said Ausonius suspiciously.

"Or her lover?" asked Herculanus.

The youth's face flamed, his brow knit wrathfully. "Neither her kinsman nor her betrothed lover. I am commissioned—I have already said so—to ransom her. Name the price."

Ausonius was about to utter a refusal, but Saturninus hastily anticipated him.

"You would pay any price as ransom?"

"Any."

"Is she a princess or a noble's daughter, that your people set so high a value upon her liberty?"

"She is a free maiden of our people, and has as much right to our protection as a queen."

"Well, your protection has been of little service to her," cried Herculanus, laughing.

"I will give her weight in silver, nay, if needful, in gold — her full weight."

"Pshaw!" replied Ausonius, smiling, "that isn't saying much. The little one doesn't weigh heavily. Don't trouble yourself: I will not release her."

"Pardon me, Prefect," said Saturninus quietly, yet without averting his eyes an instant from Adalo, "I must again remind you that the Barbarian girl is not your slave, but mine."

"What? O ye gods!" cried Adalo, wild with grief and horror.

He hastily advanced two paces toward the Roman. "Is it possible? Is it true? Say no, Ausonius." The voice of the usually defiant youth now sounded almost pleading.

"Unfortunately it is true," replied the Prefect sullenly.

But Saturninus, who now knew what he wished to learn, answered calmly: "The captive is my property. And she cannot be bought with gold. But I will release her, if you—" he rose, approached Adalo and whispered into his ear.

The youth burst forth angrily: "The location of our fortification and the strength of our force? Come into the woods, Roman: you will learn there."

Saturninus stepped back coldly. "As you choose. Never will the red-haired maiden see her people."

"And consider, Barbarian," hissed Herculanus, "we need not use the rack to torture a maiden."

Adalo, with a fierce cry, gripped the hilt of the short sword at his side. But he controlled himself and only cast a look at Herculanus, who, unable to endure it, blinked and turned his eyes away.

Adalo, tortured by deep anguish, gazed inquiringly, searching into the characters and dispositions of the two men; first into Saturninus's stern, handsome face, then his glance scanned Ausonius's features, kindly in expres-

sion, but wholly lacking the impress of a firm will. He sighed heavily. But, conscious that the eyes of all were fixed intently upon him, he summoned his whole strength, and said quietly: "If any harm should befall her, her people will take terrible vengeance." The firmly repressed, yet intense fury in the brief words, did not fail to make an impression.

Adalo, without any gesture of farewell, turned to leave the tent, and was already standing under the curtains at the entrance, when Saturninus cried: "And what name has the envoy of the Alemanni?"

The youth turned quickly and, comprehending the whole group in a single glance, exclaimed: "Adalo, son of Adalger. You shall remember it." He passed outside the tent as he spoke.

"Uncle," cried Herculanus, "wasn't that the fellow's name? Yes, yes, it is he: the 'Mars of the Alemanni!' Seize him — and the war is over!"

Before Ausonius could answer, Saturninus, hurrying out of the tent, said: "Beware, Ausonius! Nothing in heaven or on earth seems to be sacred to this nephew of yours. But

that Barbarian's eyes must be quickly bandaged again; their glance is like an eagle's." He hastened after the envoy.

Ausonius, vexed by many things, said very irritably, in a tone almost never heard from the lips of the kind-hearted noble: "I have long been displeased with you, nephew Herculanus. I am very much displeased. Very! Extremely!"

He passed him with a hasty step, harshly thrusting aside the arms which Herculanus stretched toward him with a soothing gesture. The nephew's eyes followed him with a glance that boded evil.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MEANWHILE the Batavians, Adalo's two companions, and the bear-leader had lain chattering peaceably together around the camp-fire.

There was, in general, so total a lack of any feeling of unity among the various German tribes that the Alemanni did not think of openly reproaching the Batavians, or even cherishing any secret resentment because they were fighting under Roman standards against other Germans: Alemanni mercenaries also fought against the German, as well as against the other foes of Rome.

So the Roman bronze vessel, filled with dark red Rhaetian wine, was passed to the two Alemanni also, and the Batavians gladly drank the mead which Adalo's companions had brought in long wooden vessels fastened on their backs. For in those days the thirst of the Alemanni was great and frequent, and the brave fellows — hospitality in the enemy's camp had

not been expected — would have been reluctant to do without liquor during the long hours consumed on the journey there, the waiting, and the return.

The Sarmatian, with laudable impartiality, drank wine and mead by turns. He, too, at a sign from Rignomer, had taken his seat by the fire. The bear lay stretched at full length at his side, while he began to throw sharp knives into the air and nimbly catch them again, to the astonishment of the Batavians, who gave him small copper coins. His lame companion was lying under the bushes, sleeping so soundly that he snored.

"Ah," cried Rignomer, wiping his chin with his bare arm and returning the little cask to the Alemanni, "may Fro reward you for the drink! Nothing has tasted so good since I turned my back on the Issala and my mother's earth-cellar. She brews it even stronger."

"Wine tastes still better," said his countryman.

"Better in the mouth, Brinno; but mead and ale taste better in the heart: it's home drink. And the best part is not the moist wave that runs down the throat, but the memory of

many a happy hour of former drinks, which hovers over it like the rustling of a heron's wings. Well, Alemanni, when will it come to fighting? And will you seek us, or must we hunt for you?"

"As the Duke chooses," replied the other, draining his cup — "and all-ruling Odin."

The Batavian's face changed.

"Don't name him to me! I fear *him;* you wearers of hair I don't. I've seized many a man of you with the left hand by his Suabian tail, and thrust the short Roman sword into his throat with my right. But I fear the wearer of the mantle! He is hostile to us mercenaries. It seems to me as though he were hovering in the air opposing us, wherever we fight. There, Juggler, drink again. And then show (we've seen *your* tricks) what your bear has learned. Ought not your boy in the bushes yonder, the lame fellow, to have something too? But where is he?"

"Ho, Zizais, dog of a cripple, are you deaf as well as dumb? Where are you hiding? Look, there he lies over by the spring, nearer to the ditch: he has a fever, and went for water. Now stir yourself, my brown dancing maid."

He whispered in the ear of the animal which, growling, rose on its hind legs; the juggler put his long staff in its fore-paws, and now the clumsy creature turned slowly in a circle, keeping time to a monotonous melancholy tune which he first played on his huge flute and then sang, beating time on a bronze cup with a knife-blade. The Romans laughed loudly at the clumsy dancer.

"What is the dainty damsel's name?" asked Rignomer.

"Bruna. She can prophesy too. Take heed! Ask what you choose."

Taking the staff from the bear's paws as he spoke, he laid his hand on her head. The animal now dropped down on her fore-paws and looked up intelligently at her master, who thrust some bread into her mouth.

"Well, you wise Wala," laughed Rignomer, "will the Romans conquer in the next battle?"

The Sarmatian lightly stroked the animal's head against the hair: the bear, growling angrily, shook her head.

The Batavian started, the laugh died on his lips. "She is Donar's friend," he said dejectedly. "He speaks through her. I thought so."

He spoke as if the battle had already been fought and lost.

"Well," said the juggler consolingly, "I'll question her for you. Bruna, clever wood spirit, look sharply at this hero: Will he come out of this war safe and go back to his mother who brews the good mead?"

He lightly stroked the bear from the forehead down toward the tail: Bruna nodded assent.

"I thank thee, Donar," cried Rignomer cheerily. "What do I care for the Romans' victory? I'm going home soon. Hark ye, fellow, the clever fortune-teller pleases me. Will you sell her?"

The Sarmatian looked thoughtful. The question was evidently unexpected. "Not willingly — not cheaply —" he said hesitatingly, wishing to gain time for reflection. "I live by her tricks even more than by my own."

"You are right, Rignomer," Brinno observed. "It's often very dull in camp when we're not on duty. She would amuse us."

"And I'd like to startle the Romans, the proud legionaries who look down scornfully upon us auxiliaries, but always send us to the bloodiest posts in battle."

"I suppose the creature came from these forests?" asked Brinno.

The juggler nodded.

"Aha," cried Rignomer, laughing, "then we must have her. We'll take her to little Bissula: the brown German to the red one."

"Who is Bissula?" drawled the juggler.

"The most charming girl I ever saw," cried Brinno quickly.

"Yes! Every one who sees her is fond of her," Rignomer went on.

"Especially we Germans!"

"So are the Romans, I think; at any rate, most of them. But she often sits gazing so sadly toward the woods, as if longing for something. Her countrywoman will amuse her. I'll buy the animal from you."

"No, no! I don't want to part with her. But,"—his eyes sparkled—"I'll tell you. Take me, the bear, and—" (he was going to say my boy, but as he no longer saw him lying beside the spring, nor in his former place, he checked himself) "into the camp for a few days, till you are tired of the toy."

But both mercenaries shook their heads.

"That won't do! You jugglers and animal tamers are regarded as professional spies."

"The Tribune would have us flogged if we even let you pass through the gate of the camp."

"Well," replied the bear-leader, "I won't sell her, but I'll leave the creature with you a few days; I'll soon come back for her."

"Without pay? That's suspicious!" said Brinno.

"Not without pay!" the other interposed quickly. "Not on any account! I earn my living by her. You must pay me."

"Very well. But listen: is the beast perfectly tame?"

"Perfectly. If she gets a little unruly, you need only buckle the broad collar here — do you see? — a little tighter."

"I see."

"Don't neglect to tell everybody who has anything to do with the animal," warned the Sarmatian.

"Especially the little one," said Brinno. "It would be a pity to have a hair of her head harmed."

"If only people do nothing to injure her, this clever countrywoman won't bite them."

Steps echoed from the camp: Adalo was being escorted back.

"Zizais, where are you? We must go!" called the Sarmatian, turning toward the bushes to search for the boy, who came limping slowly out of the thicket.

The woollen blanket was now removed from the envoy's head; with a gloomy face he swung himself upon his horse, his two companions did the same, and all three soon vanished in the darkness of the forest.

The clank of weapons sounded at the gate: the Thracian spearmen were coming to relieve the Batavians. At the same moment the bear-leader and the cripple emerged from the thicket at the left; the former gave the animal to Rignomer, who tried to drag it with him by the leather collar toward the camp. But the bear resisted, growling and bracing herself on her hind paws, as she looked beseechingly with her intelligent eyes at her master.

"Come, come, Bruna," urged the latter— "they are good people (he stooped and whispered in her ear) won't you go yet? Didn't you understand?"

He scratched his head in perplexity. Then

the cripple limped forward, took from his moleskin knapsack a narrow long blue kerchief,—it looked like a girdle,—and handed it to his master. The latter, laughing, gave it to the Batavian.

"Yes, yes. That will help. Hold it before the animal. No! Not in front of her eyes: her nose. There! See how she sniffs? She is getting the scent. Are you surprised? Yes, the cloth belonged to Bruna's dearest playfellow. Go on slowly. You see, she is following like a lamb. Well, greet the Roman camp for me, Bruna: I'll soon come for you."

CHAPTER XXX.

DURING the following night Saturninus made a little reconnoitring expedition northward and, as far as it was possible to venture into the swamps without trustworthy guides, towards the east. But he was compelled to return to camp about noon without success.

"They are evidently hiding in the north-west," he said angrily to his best officer, Decius, as they rode side by side. "But none of the guides will go in that direction, and we cannot penetrate into those forest-clad mountains by force until Nannienus arrives. If we had only brought his troops with us by land! It is almost useless, it seems to me, to build galleys to blockade the lake."

"Yes," Decius assented. "The Barbarians must have burned all their boats, or carried them inland: not one is to be seen."

Directly after the General's return a Batavian came to his tent, and asked to see him alone.

"What do you desire, brave Rignomer?"

"To report myself for punishment. I drank too much wine."

"When?"

"Last night."

"How? While on guard outside the camp?"

"No, after I was relieved."

"The trader will be scourged. Who sold it to you?"

"No one. That was just it! I shouldn't have drunk so much if I had bought it. But given! A present of Massican wine! Who can resist it?"

"No German, it seems. And you report for punishment? Of your own free will? Highly improbable. You were probably detected and wish to anticipate?"

"No: no one discovered me. When I was relieved, I had been completely sobered by fright."

"Why?"

"My lord,"—he spoke hesitatingly,—"it is about the Idise."

"Who is that?"

"Why, the red-haired wood nymph."

"What of her?" asked the Illyrian eagerly, now keenly intent.

"My lord, I wish her well! As — as we all do."

"As we all do?"

"Yes, yes," replied the German, smiling, "even you, General; I've noticed it. Well, I report for punishment, and will tell the whole story because — because I'm afraid the little one's life is in danger."

"Tell your story," Saturninus commanded, evidently startled. "Who gave you the wine?"

"Davus, the Prefect's slave."

"Ah — and what happened then?"

"Then it happened that I drank too much, and when I mounted guard outside of the little one's tent, I soon fell asleep on the soft turf. A terrible growling roused me. The she-bear owned by a juggler, a Sarmatian, which I brought into camp yesterday and carried to the captive girl, acted exactly as though she were a human being, that is, a man; for she followed the red elf everywhere."

"Suspicious! Did Bissula know the animal? Did she call it by any name?"

"No. But she was very much pleased when she saw the she-bear; her face flushed and paled. So much pleased that I asked, as you

did just now: 'Bissula, do you know each other? How does it happen that the beast will have nothing to do with anybody except you? Hark! how friendly her growl sounds: why doesn't she treat us the same?'

"'Oh,' replied Bissula, laughing, 'she comes from our country and she knows that I am the only one who understands her Alemanni language. Don't you believe me? Well, then ask her,' she added, still laughing, shaking back her curling locks, 'maybe she will tell you.'

"In short, the monster would not leave her side, and followed her into the tent when she went to bed. So the bear's growling waked me. I started up and saw by the light of the campfire a man, running at full speed, vanish around the corner of the nearest tent.

"I rushed in. The young girl had seen nothing — she had fallen asleep. She was trying to soothe the furious animal, which, bleeding from a dagger thrust in its right fore-paw, was angrily crunching in its jaws a piece of brown cloth. At last Bissula, while washing the wound, coaxed it away. Here it is."

He gave it to Saturninus. The Roman General examined it closely.

"This is certainly — but stay! Do you speak first, Rignomer. What do you think it is?"

"A fragment from the hem of a mantle."

"What kind of a mantle?"

"A Roman one: a sagum."

"Who wear brown mantles — the only ones?"

"The Thracian spearmen and the mailed riders."

"Right. Say nothing of this matter to any one; and go."

"And my punishment?"

"You are pardoned. But drink gift wine cautiously in future."

"Indeed I will, General."

"In the inspection I am about to make you will act shrewdly and prudently, as I order. And listen: one thing more. You owe the young girl some atonement: do you perceive it?"

"Unfortunately."

"Will you make it?"

"Gladly.

"Then mark me. She has complained that I have her watched continually, even during the day. Thrax, my fat scribe, to whom I

gave the secret commission, has acted very awkwardly; she found him out long ago. I promised to rid her of him. But she must not remain unguarded."

"Certainly not."

"After this attack less than ever. You, Rignomer,—I will relieve you meanwhile from any other duty,—must henceforth follow the young girl: but unnoticed."

"I thank you, General. I'll make amends for my fault. She shall neither escape nor come to any harm. And she shall not discover that she is constantly watched and guarded."

Directly afterwards the tubas gave the signal through the streets of the camp for a general inspection of the troops, in marching equipments, with mantles. The foot-soldiers were to occupy the wide space on both sides of the Prætorium in the Forum and the Quæstorium, and the cross streets intersecting the camp from east to west, the Via Principalis and the Via Quintana; but the horsemen were to remain directly in front of their rows of tents, near the southern gate facing the lake, the Porta Decumana.

The Tribune mounted his horse and rode along the front. When he had inspected the Batavians, he ordered a body of them to follow him and station themselves behind the mailed riders, at the same time making a sign to Rignomer. The Tribune first rode at a walk down the lines of the mailed cavalry, then he ordered them to wheel and pass before him.

"You look pale, O Herculanus!" he called to their commander. "Have you been up all night? Did you sacrifice to Bacchus after the evening banquet?"

"A little."

Saturninus now closed the inspection. Turning the corner of the Via Media, which intersected the camp from north to south, he motioned to Rignomer, dismounted, and gave him his horse.

"Who had a piece missing from his mantle?"

"No one. But one had a new piece of cloth sewed into the hem — the color did not match, it had not yet been faded by the sun — exactly the size of that scrap."

"An officer?"

"Yes."

"It was he: it was Herculanus."

"But my lord, you saw the horsemen only from the front."

"Yet I know it. Be watchful. Guard the little one."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ADALO had retraced the road to the Holy Mountain with a heavy heart, and with deep pain he made his report in the Duke's tent at daybreak.

"I have gained nothing," were his closing words, "seen nothing of the camp, and not a sign of—of her. What is to be done?"

"Wait," replied the Duke, stroking his long beard and half closing his eye.

"Wait! it is easy for you to say that."

"Harder than for you, who still have thrice as many years before you as I."

"But Bissula! Surely I have told you that she does not belong to the old man, her friend. When will you lead us to the assault?"

"When it is time."

"When will it at last be time?"

"Not before the moon has vanished from the sky."

"Have the wise women read that to you in the runes of destiny?" asked Adalo wrathfully.

"I do not consult old women, when I am to fight; but neither will I risk the victory for young ones. The moon must not shine; the night must be dark. And another thing: the torrents of rain were a great help, they kept the Romans in their camp, shut them out of the marshes and forests. But now everything must get dry again, that it may burn merrily. The god of wishes has already sent the right wind. Only have patience a short time. Something else, too, must first be accomplished."

"Then at least let me try to inform her by a secret messenger how she can surely escape."

"No, by my wrath! Before we storm, I will show you why it is impossible for her to escape by the way of which you are thinking. It would lead her into the very midst of the guards outside the camp and betray everything to them. But, did you not meet Zercho on the way back?"

"No; but my companions told me. So you sent him?"

"Sent him? No; he went without my orders. But hark — voices — there he is, and some one with him."

Zercho and Sippilo came hurrying into the

tent. The young noble was amazed to see his fair-haired brother in such a disguise.

"Boy, what have you dared to do? You went with him as a spy?" he cried wrathfully. "How you look!"

"Like an elf of darkness; but the soot rubs off easily. See!" Laughing merrily, he threw his arms around Adalo's neck and pressed his curly black head against his brother's cheek.

"Don't scold him until you know all — if you can do it then," pleaded Zercho.

"Make your report," the Duke commanded.

"My lord, much — almost all is well! Yet not everything. Unfortunately I could not get into the camp. But Bruna did," he added, grinning, as he turned to Adalo, "and she'll find the little mistress."

"Can the she-bear fly out again and bring us information about the camp?" said Hariowald angrily.

"Not she, but perhaps this paper can," replied Sippilo, laughing, as he drew a roll of papyrus from his breast. "While Zercho and Bruna were making the sentries laugh and stare, I succeeded, unnoticed, in reaching the ditch, slipped down, and climbed part way up the

wall on the opposite side. I dared not risk going to the top, some one would have seen me there. I'm as slender and supple as an eel. Part of the earth in the wall had been washed away by the rain between the palisades in many places; I squeezed into one and got my head and one arm through, but could go no farther, my shoulders were too broad. Then for a while I was very uncomfortable; I couldn't move forward and did not want to go back without having seen something; besides, the cramping hurt. Suddenly I heard voices, footsteps, and saw hurrying toward me along the inner path of the camp, close to the wall — Bissula."

Adalo uttered a cry of joy, and the Duke, too, looked at the bold lad with surprise and pleasure.

"Several paces behind her a fat, very fat man came waddling along. She didn't see me, for she was looking straight in front of her, and her face was not merry as usual, but very sorrowful. I risked the chance that the panting fellow would hear me. But I didn't trust myself to call with a human voice; I began the warbling notes of the chaffinch. Often and often we had practised together to try which

could imitate it the more closely; but I did better and lured the little male bird in a fit of furious jealousy to my hiding-place among the leaves. Bissula started, looked toward the gap in the palisades where the bird — so late in the season — was singing, saw and instantly recognized me; she could probably see only my eyes, not my disfiguring sooty hair. Stooping as if to look for the finch, she whispered: 'Save me quickly.'"

An expression of delight flashed over Adalo's handsome face. "She does not love him; she wants to return!" his heart cried exultingly. Sippilo noticed it and guessed the cause of his joy. His young face grew very grave as he went on: "But alas, she added: 'Terrible danger, the greatest, threatens me!'"

Adalo groaned and clutched the nearest tent pole to support himself: his brain was reeling.

"Go on," said the Duke.

"She could say no more, for the fat man was now close behind her: I saw some long yellowish-white thing sticking out of the front of his mantle.

"'This is unbearable!' she cried furiously, turning upon him. 'Are you my shadow,

slave? Why do you follow at my heels? Leave me!'

"'By command of my lord the Tribune.'

"'Indeed?' she cried, half mischievously, half angrily. 'Then — by command of your lord, the Tribune, you shall run and sweat well. Can you catch the roe of the lake forest?'

"And she darted off as swiftly as the merlin shoots down the mountain stream. The fat man, panting and swearing, followed. At the end of the road along the wall she turned, glided nimbly past the breathless slave, and again ran toward me: she probably wanted to tell me something, but I understood only the one word, 'hasten!'

"Then she was gone; for her companion, pursuing her, now approached me. When directly opposite he raised his cloak, which was hanging around his legs, and the yellowish-white thing dropped from his breast. He puffed along, and it rolled close to the two posts in the sides of my hole. I hastily snatched it. I wanted to wait for Bissula to pass again, but I saw several splendidly armed Romans stop her, and all went into the inner camp. Then I drew myself backward from between

the posts (it wasn't easy; a little skin and hair were left sticking there in remembrance of Sippilo), slid down the wall, climbed the other side of the ditch, entered the bushes, crept back to my former place, and came just as Zercho gave the she-bear to the guards and left the camp."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE Duke had already taken the roll of papyrus from the boy's hand and spread it open on the table. His eye sparkled with the joy of victory.

"What do I read here? 'Four squadrons of mailed horsemen at the Porta Decumana, all the baggage also piled at the Porta Decumana.

"'The wall eight feet high.

"'The ditch five feet deep.

"'The weakest point the corner in the northwest'—and so it continues for a long time!

"Thanks to thee, god of wishes. Thou hast sent this, no one else, to thy sons. Look here! A plan of the entire camp! Exact: all the measurements. And here, marked on the margin, the strength of all the troops—horsemen, foot-soldiers, carters; and their distribution in the camp. Look here, Adalo! Even the great pine, the tree of the earth-goddess, is noted. What is this beside the

tree? What stands there above the stones of sacrifice which cover the turf near the tree? A tent, empty, without soldiers, filled with provisions!

"In this page I hold victory. Go now, Zercho: your reward shall be paid. As I promised, I will buy your freedom, whatever sum your master, Suomar, may ask: he cannot give it to you, his lands are not large, and you are his most valuable property."

"O mighty, generous lord, I thank you!"

"Then you can return, a free man, to your own people, to Sarmatia. That will be your wish?"

But Zercho shook his unkempt head. Tears filled his eyes: "No," he said. "I will stay here, my lord, if Suomar will let me keep the little patch of ground I have always tilled—I had to give him only the twelfth sheaf from it—and the hut of woven willow branches by the lake. I would rather stay."

"Strange! Do you feel no longing for your home, your own people?"

"Home! We Sarmatians have none like yours, you patient, plough-guiding men, which you occupy beside the immovable hearthstone,

rooted to the earth. Our home is the steppe, the broad, free steppe, which can be measured neither by the eye nor the steed. Ah! it is beautiful." The man's eyes sparkled, and suddenly Zercho, usually so dull and taciturn, was overwhelmed by an enthusiasm which, to the listeners' astonishment, gave his words wings. "Yes, it is more beautiful, more magnificent than all the Roman and German lands I have ever seen. When, in the spring, the sun has kissed away the last snow; when the moor laughs; when the steppe blossoms; when by day hundreds of hawks scream at once in the blue air, and the wild stallions, which have never borne a rider, neigh so terribly and dash so furiously past the tents, trampling over everything in their path as they pursue the trembling mares, till the heart of the boldest man might quiver with fear and yet also with joy at sight of such fierce, uncurbed strength! And oh, the nights, when the thousands and thousands of heavenly spirits look down from above, far, far more star-gods, shining far more brightly than here with you; and when, in the darkness, the cranes and wild-swans pass like thick clouds —for there are so many that they cast shadows

in the moonlight — like resonant, clanging clouds high in the air!

"Doubtless the steppes of Sarmatia are more beautiful than any other lands and the lives of the Jazyges on their swift steeds are freer than other lives. But Zercho — Zercho no longer suits the steppe. I am like the bird, the wild bird of the moor, which boys keep for years in a small cage where it cannot spread its wings. If it is set free, nay, flung into the air, it drops down and lies still; it can no longer fly, it has forgotten how. So, toiling with the plough for many years and staying in one place has fettered me. Zercho can no longer ride as the Jazyges ride, vying with the wind; Zercho can no longer sleep every night on a different patch of earth and, if there be nothing better to eat, catch locusts and lizards. I am used to grain and bread, the fruit of the lands I have ploughed myself. I have no wish to leave them. And my family? I saw them all — all six — die before my eyes in one night, the terrible night when the faithless Romans — those slayers of the people, those murderous wolves! — suddenly attacked our encampment with the round, straw-thatched huts, by the Tibiscus, during an

armistice. The bright blaze of the hurdles lighted them well in their work of slaughter. My father killed, my mother hurled into the flames of the straw tent, my two sisters — oh, horrible! — tortured to death, my two brothers leaping into the stream which flowed red with blood! And I — I saw it all, stretched before the hut, my head cleft by a sword stroke, defenceless, motionless. So I lay the whole starlit night, asking the thousand gods above there: 'Why? Why? Why?' But, when day dawned, the slave dealers who, like the ravens of the air and the wolves of the steppe marshes, follow the Romans on every battle-field, came and trod on all the Jazyges who lay there, to learn whether they were still alive. I quivered under their feet, was flung into a cart, and carried with them many, many days and weeks. At last the kind-hearted Suomar bought and rescued me. For never, though I was a bondman, did he call me 'dog,' like the dealers. He treated me like — like a human being. And when the little mistress grew up, Suomar's farm became my home. And I will stay down in the willow hut beside the lake as a free man, so long as I live, if I am allowed to do so. And when

Zercho's death hour comes, the little red sprite (for we must rescue her, Adeling, and we will) shall close my eyes with her hand, and then they shall bury me in the open country, in the pastures by the lake. The cranes will pass over me at night with rustling wings and clanging cries, high in the air, and I shall hear it under the thin covering of turf and, in my death sleep, dream that I am lying in the blossoming, fragrant steppe grass."

He stopped. His cheeks were flushed; his ugly face was transfigured; never in his whole life had he uttered so many words at once.

The Duke held out his hand, saying: "No, Zercho, you are no dog. You have a heart, almost like the Alemanni's. Different, it is true, but not evil."

Adalo said nothing, but he clasped the bondman's other hand and pressed it warmly. Sippilo turned away: he did not want to let any one see his eyes.

"You have a lucky hand, boy," cried the Duke. "I can read your wishes in your eyes. Yes, you shall share the battle for the victory which your bold artifice has done so much to win."

Sippilo rushed to the old Commander-in-chief and clasped both his hands: "You diviner and fulfiller of wishes! I can imagine Odin like you! Last autumn Adalo refused me the sword, because" — he hung his head — "because I could not pierce with my spear the willow-woven Hermunduri shield in our hall. Pshaw, I was only a child then; but at the spring festival I pierced the old Roman shield which Suomar gave me for a target."

"I had bored six holes in it and stopped them up again," Zercho whispered to the Duke; "but let him go. I'll protect him."

Hariowald dismissed the bondman and the lad.

"Well," urged Adalo vehemently, "in this sheet you hold in your hands the victory, — you said so yourself, — so let us fight at last."

But the Duke silently shook his head.

"Consider. 'Hasten' was her last word! To-night?"

"No. What is one girl in comparison to a whole nation?"

"I beseech you! I implore you! You are my friend — my kinsman."

"I am Duke of the Alemanni."

"Well then," cried Adaló, deeply incensed, "delay. I will save her — I alone! There is a way, known only to myself and to you. I will use it."

He turned to rush from the tent, but quickly, with a threatening look, the old noble barred his way. "Stop, boy! Do not stir from this place. Will you rob your people of certain victory for the sake of a pair of blue eyes?"

"I will not rob them of it! I will only appear to-night in the Roman camp, — I alone, — and bear her out of it in these arms, or leave my life there."

"Whether you live or die, the secret will be discovered — the surest way to victory in our attack."

"You will conquer, with or without Adalo, in other ways. I will save the girl I love before it is too late."

He tried to force himself past the Duke, but the old man seized him by both shoulders with an iron grasp and forced him to stand.

"And I will accuse you before the popular assembly, like that treacherous king; I will have you hung between two wolves to a bough of the accursed withered yew."

"Do what you choose after I have saved her or died with her," cried the frantic youth, wrenching himself free. But, with unexpected strength, the old Duke flung him, reeling, back into the tent.

"I will have you bound hand and foot like a madman. You are mad. Freya has bewitched you. Hear it, Adalger, high in Valhalla: Adalo, your son, no longer heeds a hero's duty or manly honor. He must be bound with willow withes, with ropes, that he may not become base and destroy his people for a woman's sake."

Agitated, overpowered, crushed, Adalo sank prostrate, his hands clenched in his long locks, moaning: "Bissula — lost — lost!"

The Duke, unobserved, cast a keen sympathizing glance at the youth. He saw that he had convinced and conquered him.

Adalo went out, grave and thoughtful, to be alone with his grief.

. . . . . .

In the course of the day a messenger secretly conveyed to the Roman camp a letter from Adalo, addressed to Saturninus and Ausonius. The young chieftain, on the pretext of inspecting the farthest outposts, had gone with

his envoy from the top of the Holy Mountain through the whole seven fortifications encircling it to the last one at the foot, and then ridden with him into the forest which stretched between it and the Roman camp. Here he awaited the answer, his noble face pale and disfigured by the long mental conflict through which he had passed. When he heard in the distance the hoof-beats of the returning horse (evening had come, and the mountain peaks on the opposite side of the lake were glowing with crimson light), he ran breathless to meet it.

"Well," he cried, "where is the answer to the letter?"

"They gave me no answer. Both the Roman generals — for I had them both called, as you ordered — read your letter before me with great, great astonishment. They talked together, with loud exclamations, in words I did not understand, not Roman ones. Then both turned to me, the older one, who was formerly in the country, speaking first: 'Tell your master the answer is: "Never."' And the younger man added: 'Not even for this price.'"

Then Adalo suddenly fell prone like a young pine whose last prop above the last root has

been cut by the axe. He had dropped face forward. The faithful attendant sprang from his horse, sat down on the grass, and took the senseless youth's head in his lap. Adalo lay unconscious a long time, fairly stupefied by grief. The stars were already shining in the sky, and the bats darting through the trees, when, panting for breath, he climbed the mountain.

"That was the last effort," he said to himself. "Nothing is left now except death—death in battle, not to save her, alas! only her corpse: for if shame be inflicted on her, she will not survive it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BUT, eagerly as Saturninus watched for the galleys expected from Arbor, another was to learn their anticipated departure long before he knew of it. This was Duke Hariowald.

On a wooded hill, the hill of Zio, named the Geerebühl, east of the Holy Mountain, almost directly opposite to Arbor, a little band of Alemanni spies watched night and day, one, relieved every hour, gazing steadily across the lake at the Hill of Mercury, the nearest height south of Arbor on the southern shore of the lake.

The region around this harbor fortress, which was wholly under Roman rule, was inhabited by colonists of various tribes: among them many Alemanni whom capture, or voluntary surrender and removal, had led to the better-tilled, more richly cultivated southern shore.

At noon on the day of Adalo's secret message a slender, almost invisible column of smoke

rose from the Hill of Mercury on the southern shore: instantly a thick grayish-black cloud of smoke ascended from the Geerebühl on the north shore. This was clearly seen from the eastern side of the summit of the Holy Mountain,— the Hill of Mercury was *not* visible from it,— and one of the guards who constantly watched the Geerebühl, instantly rushed into the Duke's tent. "Smoke is rising on Zio's Mountain! A high column of smoke."

Hariowald came out of his tent in full armor (during the past week he had scarcely removed it night or day), with his battle helmet on his noble head. This helmet was a very strange one: whoever unexpectedly saw it gleam before him might well be startled.

In those days, as well as now, the great white owl was a rare visitor to Lake Constance. Scarcely once in a decade did this stranger from the far north go so far southwest in its migratory flight as the neighborhood of the Alps. Early in the winter of the previous year Adalo had brought down with his arrow a magnificent specimen of the superb bird of prey from a tall fir-tree in the forest by the lake, and given the huge bird with its gleaming snow-white

plumage, marked only with a few rusty brown feathers in undulating lines on the breast, to his white-haired cousin as a splendid ornament for his helmet.

The owl now spread above the bronze head-piece its huge pinions which, though not stretched to their full width, extended more than three feet. It was not mounted as eagle and swan wings usually were, with the tips of the feathers toward the back of the helmet, but in the opposite way, turned forward, startling and confusing the spectator by the threatening attitude — a true helmet of terror, such as Odin wears when he rushes into battle at the head of his troops.

With this helmet and clad in full armor, the Duke came out of his tent and motioned to one of the heralds, who always waited his orders here. The man seized the long crooked horn of the aurochs, which hung ready on one of the posts of the tent, and sounded it three times. The summons echoed far and wide. Instantly the other heralds, carrying white-ash staffs in their hands, and wearing smaller horns hung by leather thongs over their shoulders, hurried down from the summit in every direc-

tion, through all the lines of the fortifications, bearing the Duke's summons to the most distant outpost.

The warriors flocked from all sides, fully armed, swiftly climbing the mountain; only the guards needed to protect the fords across the swamps, the barricades, and the narrow entrances to the ring walls remained behind. All pressed up the mountain and, as soon as they reached the summit, surged toward a giant ash-tree which, from the top of the loftiest mountain peak, thrust its branches into the clouds.

Close to its trunk a sort of judge's tribunal had been built of large stones; an oblong one rested like a back against the tree; another of the same height, laid across two blocks sunk in the earth, formed the seat.

Several stone steps led up to the high seat, and on them lay various weapons, among them one very plain shield and spear, with the rune *fe*, corresponding to the Latin *F*. Then came a costly boar helmet, a richly ornamented bronze shield, covered with a boar's hide and, like the helmet, decorated with two boar's tusks outstretched defiantly; a sword in a costly sheath of polished linden wood, richly mounted with

bronze; a sharp battle axe and a spear, the handles of both adorned and strengthened by gilded nails: these weapons bore as a house-mark drawings of two boar tusks. Last of all were a small, very light round shield, a short spear, and a dainty sword with a white leather belt painted with red lead: each of the three weapons bore as house-mark a stag's antlers.

The Duke had not yet taken his seat. Standing erect on the horizontal stone, with his spear in his right hand, he scanned the warriors flocking from every direction. A huge oblong shield, almost the height of a man, painted red, with black runes inscribed upon it, hung above his head on a bough of the ash.

The whole top of the peak around the tree was inclosed and girdled by "cords and staves"; that is, by hazel wands and spears, which — the latter with the iron points uppermost — stood thrust into the earth at distances of seven feet apart, and were bound together by linen bands almost a hand's breadth wide, knotted around the middle of the staffs, the red hue of the bands proclaiming that the popular assembly was to judge matters of life and death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AFTER the surging to and fro of the men pressing forward into the circle, the loud voices, and the clank of weapons had somewhat died away, the Duke raised his spear and struck with it three solemn strokes on the bronze shield. Instantly deep silence reigned. "The assembly is opened!" said Hariowald, and slowly took his seat, crossing one foot over the other.

Throwing back the long, full, dark-blue mantle, fastened by a clasp on the left shoulder, he rested his spear like a staff on his right shoulder, and raising his left hand with the fingers extended, said slowly:

"I, the Judge, I ask you for the law!
I ask you, ye free men:
Is this the hour and the place,
To have and to hold
A judgment righteous
Upon noble Alemanni,
The sons of victory—
House and estate,

Cattle and chattels,
Money and lands,
Peace and liberty,
Body and life?
Point out, ye men of knowledge,
The law to the Judge."

Two elderly men stepped forward, drew their swords, raised them toward heaven, and said with long pauses, the words of one always blending with those of the other:

"We will point out, as we know it,
To thee, Judge, the law:
This is the hour and the place
For judgment righteous:
On the conquered and inherited
Ancient soil of the Alemanni,
By the all-conquering sun's
Clear, shining, ascending,
Radiant light,
Beneath the ancient
Ash of our fathers,
In Odin's temple,
On cattle and chattels,
Money and lands,
Peace and liberty,
Body and life,
Justly we judge
And find, we free men,
Sentence righteous."

Both withdrew into the circle.

"Before we march forth to the battle against the foe," the Duke now broke the silence, "and we shall set out soon, very soon—"

Loud shouts of joy and rattling of weapons burst forth, which the old noble allowed to die away; then he continued:

"The popular assembly must first pronounce judgment and decide questions of justice and law. First on Fiskulf, the fisherman, from Rohr-Mos, the rush marshes. Where is the accuser?"

Adalo stepped forward hesitatingly.

"Here: I, Adalo, son of Adalger."

"Step to the right. Where is the defendant?"

"Here!" said a man in plain garments; he wore an old fishing net for a girdle. With head bent sorrowfully he came forward, lowering his eyes.

"What is your complaint?" asked the judge.

"Breaking the oath of military duty."

"That is a matter of life and death. Tell me the law: may Adalo, son of Adalger, make such a charge here?"

One of the two old men stepped forward again, and said:

"The assembly knows Adalo, the Adeling, as a free man of unblemished reputation: his estate is in the Linzgau: it would cover any charge of false accusation: he may make complaint in a matter of life and death."

At a sign from the judge the young noble began:

"I make the complaint reluctantly,—against my wish and will,—but my oath requires it. For when I took command of the men of the western shore of the lake, I was obliged to swear on the Duke's hand to denounce before the assembly any breach of his orders that might occur in my troop. So speak I must, for I fear to break the oath. You all know that the Duke forbade, on pain of death, the lighting of a fire by day or night in any of the boats where the fugitives from the country at first lay concealed among the rushes on the western shore: if the Romans, while passing, discovered by smoke or flame that there were people living in the wide marshy forests, all who were hidden there might be lost. When I set out, I repeated the Duke's command to all my men; Fiskulf was standing on my shield side. And yet, while the foe was passing along

the shore he lighted a fire on the Pike Stone which rises above the reeds. True, it was daylight, but the smoke was visible. The nearest cohort had halted and was preparing to look for the fire, which I with difficulty put out in time to lull their suspicions. I must now accuse Fiskulf of this breach of orders."

He paused and drew back a step. A murmur of indignation ran through the ranks, blended with many a loud cry of anger and reproach.

"Silence, all! Silence in the circle, until I ask your judgment," shouted the Duke from his lofty stone seat, raising his spear aloft. "I forbid reproaches; I command peace. You, Fiskulf, what say you to the charge? Denial, or confession?"

"Confession," replied the fisherman sorrowfully. "It is as the Adeling said."

"You knew the command?"

"I knew it."

"You broke the command?"

"I broke it. Alas, I am so deeply ashamed. It was from hunger — but not to satisfy my own. We had lain hidden in the marshland forest for many nights; the stock of dried fish

I had brought in the boat was exhausted. I repressed my hunger and chewed the tops of the young reeds. I would not have done it for myself; but my boy, who was with me (he had just recovered from the fever that lurks in the swamps, and he is only seven years old), cried so bitterly with hunger, begging and pleading: 'Father, father, give me something to eat!' It cut me to the heart! I speared a large pike that was sunning itself near the stone, cut it in pieces, and meant to give it to the child to eat. But loathing choked him: he only cried quietly and no longer entreated me. Then I rubbed two dry sticks together till I kindled a fire, broiled the fish on the top of the stone, and gave it to the boy to eat. I ate some myself, too."

"I was forced to accuse him," said Adalo. "But I entreat the assembly not to punish the man. No harm came from his act. A father—"

"Silence, Accuser," the judge interrupted. "You have made the complaint; he has confessed: you have nothing more to do here except to listen to the sentence. I ask: what may follow breaking an order given to the troops when the enemy is in the country?

What? You are silent? The disobedience might destroy the whole nation. What? You refuse to point out the law," the old man went on indignantly. "Or do you gray-beards no longer know what the boys learn? Answer! Point out the law,—" he rose threateningly,— "or I will tear the shield of the assembly from the ash and complain to the gods: The Alemanni have forgotten the laws of their people! What is the punishment of treason and breaking the oath of service?"

"Death!" now rang forth in many voices.

"I knew it," said the fisherman quietly. "Farewell, countrymen. I wish you victory and prosperity."

But the Duke continued:

"What death must he die? By the willow-withe? By water? By the red stroke of the knife? Or by the red flame of burning branches?"

One of the two old men stepped forward again, saying: "By his deed he has offended Zio the war-god and Odin the giver of victory. Zio demands blood upon the stone of sacrifice; Odin's will is that he shall blow in the wind. Odin is the greater god and the father of Zio: the lesser yields to the greater; the son to the

father. Odin's right is first: the oath-breaker is consecrated to Odin. He shall be hung by willow ropes under the chin, with his face toward the north, from the withered yew, a wolf at his right hand and a wolf at his left — the oldest symbols of quarrelsome, reckless law-breakers."

"He is consecrated to Odin," the judge repeated solemnly — "if Odin desires him. We will ask the god."

All gazed in astonishment, the fisherman with a faint thrill of hope, at the old man, who now continued:

"It is dishonorable and shameful for the man to swing among the branches, between the sky and the mountain top. And hitherto he has been brave — only he could not be strong enough to bear the weeping of his child. He will die useless to his people, if he hang high aloft on the tree. Well then, we will ask Odin if, perchance, he will forgive him. You all, like the accuser himself, at first wished to let the act pass unpunished. That will not do. To the Lofty One we must offer his right; but — perhaps — he will not take it. I advise that Fiskulf shall venture upon a deed in which, for

his people's welfare, he will fall, inevitably fall, unless Odin himself take pity on him and bear him away in his floating mantle."

"Speak, speak! What may I do?" cried the fisherman, with sparkling eyes. "All! All! Gladly will I die by the spear. Only not the rope of shame!"

"You shall be the first, in advance of all the others, to leap on the proudest Roman galley and — you understand how to kindle flames so well — set fire to its sails."

"Yes, yes! That he shall! Hail to the Duke!" shouted thousands of voices.

Fiskulf sprang forward to the judge's chair, lifted both hands to him, and cried: "I thank thee, Duke! Ay, thou knowest the will of Odin! The proudest Roman galley — the General's vessel in Arbor, is it not? Well: I do not yet know how I am to reach the ship on the other side of the lake; but I will die, or accomplish it."

"I will provide for that," said the Duke. "You need not go to the ship: Odin will bring the galley to you! Then do as I have told you."

"Gladly! Gladly! Oh, give me back my weapons!"

At a sign from the judge the heralds restored to him the spear and shield marked *F*, which lay on the stone steps, and he returned to the circle of his comrades, many of whom clasped his hand.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"A JOYFUL duty now awaits you," the Duke began again: "a boy of noble family asks the bestowal of the sword, the first weapon granted. Many of us know him, and all who do, wish him well. True, the young hero is not very large; but I take my oath that I saw him yesterday pierce with his spear, at fifteen paces, a moderately thick linden-wood shield. And great was his courage, bold his daring when, dauntlessly risking his life and liberty, he scaled the wall of the Roman camp, brought back most important information and placed it in the Duke's hand."

"Who is it? Who is it?" asked many voices.

Adalo stepped forward, leading his brother by the hand: "Sippilo, my brave little brother."

Then the Duke spoke:

"I ask the assembly: Shall he receive the weapons? Is the young falcon fledged?" A pleasant smile illumined the face which could look so wrathful and threatening.

"Hail to him! Hail to the Adeling! Hail to the boy! Give him the weapons."

Sippilo flushed like a young girl, but the blush was very becoming.

"Will you grant him the favor of bestowing the weapons yourself, O Duke?" pleaded Adalo. "Then, when he grasps sword or spear, he must always remember the hero to whom he first owed them, and prove himself worthy of the giver."

"I will," said the judge, rising and beckoning to the boy.

Sippilo ascended the first of the steps leading to the Duke's chair. Hariowald took the little round shield lying before him and gave it to the lad, who seized it eagerly, passing his left arm under the upper bar of the shield and clasping the lower one with his hand. "I, Hariowald, son of Hariomar, Count of Linzgau, chosen by all the Alemanni Duke for this summer's Roman war, say to you, Sippilo, son of Adalger, of age to use weapons and worthy to receive them:

"With the shield I give, protect,
Better than thine own breast,
Dearer than thine own body and life,

The noble Alemanni
Land and nation.
Shield runes, and runes of defence,
Deep burned thy brother
Its solid framework within;
They will hold and keep
The shield's shelter for thee
So long as thou thyself
Dost hold and stand
Fast by thy people."

Then he handed him the spear, saying:

"Runes of victory I, sure of triumph,
Carved for thee myself
On the sharp spear's handle.
To mortal man never
Lower it vanquished,
Nor let its shaft be shattered.
Some day, full lightly,
From thy faithful hand
When, white-bearded, thou dost win
On thy shield the battle death
'Mid blissful victory —
Then, from thy faithful hand,
Lightly will take it
On swan-wings downward to thee floating,
Shining in beauty,
Valhalla's fairest Valkyria,
And bear thee, loyal one,
Upward to Odin."

Lastly, he put on the belt from which the sword hung in its sheath, saying:

"As the belt now girdles thee,
So, as its own doth hold thee
The Alemanni army.
As the belt is for thee
Ornament and defence,
So art thou, as one link,
Ornament and defence
To us, the Alemanni."

Then Sippilo drew the short sword from its sheath, held the hilt toward the shining sun, and said:

"This bright sword will I wield
For my free nation,
For its rights, its renown,
And for Sippilo's kinsmen!
Should I e'er do aught else,
May the keen, shining edge,
The sharp blade, the wise blade —
For this oath it knoweth —
Deal my faithless heart a death-blow!
Sun, thou dost see it;
The Lofty One heard it,
And Zio is witness,
With the Alemanni's
High-crested army."

The boy now leaped joyously down the steps and, proud of his new weapons, took his place beside his brother amid loud shouts of applause from the multitude, especially his kinsmen and those who had the stag's antlers inscribed on their shields.

"Now the next act of justice. One who is absent wishes to free his bondman in the assembly. Suomar, son of Suobert, who is on guard in the eastern marshes, liberates his slave Zercho. I have bought his freedom for the sake of good service rendered to the army; his master, to whom a messenger was sent, is willing to set him free; and Adalo, the Adeling, by his wish, will speak and act for him. Bring the bondman."

Then Zercho, who had been waiting outside the body of freemen, was led before the stone seat by two heralds. His eyes were sparkling with joy.

Adalo, holding in his hand a bow and arrow, stepped forward, saying: "As the representative of Suomar, your master, I announce in the open assembly that he has received from Hariowald, Count of the Linzgau, a faultless stallion four years old, two cows of Roman breed, twenty

sheep, a bronze armlet seven times twisted, and a silver solidus; in exchange for which he frees you, Zercho, the Jazyge whom he bought as a prisoner of war from a dealer in Vindonissa. By my hand and word he liberates you: take the last blow which you have to bear as a slave." He gave him a light stroke on the cheek. "And see, look, all ye freemen: as I shoot this arrow, so free and far, unrestrained and unfettered, Suomar, who hitherto has been your master, leaves you. You may go forth as free as this arrow flies — free and restrained by no one!"

As he spoke he sent the arrow, winged with heron feathers, high into the air. The missile whirred from the long bow, whose string struck echoing against the beautifully polished wood. Zercho watched the arrow. High, high up it flew, till it vanished in the blue sky. But he did not see clearly; his eyes were swimming in tears; it was hard to force back a loud sob. From long years of custom, he was about to throw himself prostrate on the ground and, clasping the Adeling's feet, kiss his hands in token of gratitude. But the latter quickly stopped him, and the Duke said:

"You are free now, Zercho! Rejoice, free-

man! For, though your master's hand was gentle, bondage is pitiable and withers strength and courage. Only the life of the free is life: the slave breathes, but he does not live."

Adalo handed him the bow, saying: "Here is this weapon, which proves your freedom before the whole people. Let it be the first one you carry in the army and for the people of the Alemanni, which has now become your nation too."

With radiant eyes and head erect the freedman now entered the ranks of the free.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A FROWN darkened the Duke's brow. "Now for the last judgment of the assembly! Other gods are drawing near, unlike those which have just viewlessly hovered above the boy's fair locks — terrible gods! Complaint is made against one of the district kings of the Alemanni."

"Ebarbold! Traitor! Rebel! Destroyer of the army! Oath-breaker!" So threatening voices rose from the throng.

"Peace! Silence in the assembly!" the judge commanded. "Where is the accuser?"

The King's weapon-bearer stepped forward, drew his sword, and said:

"I, Ebarvin, son of Erlafrid. For, like all the men of our league of peoples, I have sworn a terrible oath by all the gods and by the terrors of Hel to resist, denounce, and avenge rebellion and treachery against the league and the Duke of the Alemanni, wherever, however, and whenever I can. Well! For twenty winters I bore

the shield of King Ebarbold's father, and for as many more the shield of this Ebarbold himself. Every word I utter against him falls heavily upon my heart; but still more heavily weighs the oath I swore to the Duke for the league of the Alemanni. Well then, I accuse King Ebarbold of oath-breaking, rebellion, and treason. Thrice have I warned him, thrice have I openly threatened to reveal his conduct to the Duke and to the whole people. He laughed at the threat; he would not believe it. He said: 'The skin lies nearer to your heart than the cloak; the Ebergau is dearer to you than the nation; your own lord is more to you than the Duke.' He was mistaken. So it was in former days, so it was for a long, long time; but this wrought woe to us all.

"We have learned the lesson at last: the Romans taught us with iron rods. We have learned it in bloody straits: the people, the league of the people, is the highest thing, for it alone protects all: the hand is more precious than the finger. But he wanted to persuade me and all his followers, nay, all the fighting men in our district; and when we refused, he tried to command us by virtue of his authority as

King. He said that, if the popular assembly decided to wage war and the Duke set out on the march, we must not obey, but withdraw from the Holy Mountain, force our way if necessary, and induce the Romans to spare our district by giving hostages and submission."

A terrible roar rose from the ranks; weapons clashed; the wrath of the people burst forth furiously; several young men, brandishing their swords threateningly, sprang toward the accused, who stood, silent but defiant, directly before the judge's seat.

"Hold," cried the Duke, "down with your arms! Whoever wields them again in the place of the assembly, the place of the army, shall be punished at once."

He had started up, and now, from the upper step, he held his long dark mantle protectingly over the head of the threatened man. The tumult instantly subsided: the most hot-headed retreated into the circle in confusion.

"I ask you," the judge now began, "King Ebarbold, son—"

"Spare your words, Count of the Linzgau," interrupted the other, with a gloomy, but fearless glance. "It is all true. Kill me: you have

the power to do so, therefore you have the right. I do not wish to live! Had that been my desire, believe me, I might have fled into my own district or to the Roman camp long before you deprived me, by your men, of the royal insignia of my race or watched my every step, while you merely disarmed the insignificant fisherman. True, according to the new law of the league, you might have had me bound — me, the son of many kings, the descendant of a god! Since I have learned the disloyalty of my most faithful follower, my own old shield-bearer, I feel a loathing for the times. I no longer wish to live among a people, according to a law, which permits the horrible thing to happen that the native of a district values its King, the follower his lord, less than the empty sound of the word 'league,' the brief authority of a Duke from another district. I am too old and too proud to learn this new law. You, old man, with your greed for power, long ago, in your bloody thoughts, dedicated me to your savage Odin."

"Not I, you yourself, son of Ebor."

"Well then — slay me."

"Not I. You yourself have separated your-

self from your people by such doctrines. Yes, it is better for such men as you to die than to live: the district kings, if they offer defiance, must be sacrificed to Odin, who, as King of the people, is above all our gods and all our peoples."

"My family," said the King proudly, "runs back through a hundred ancestors to the gods: not to that crafty one, whose secret wiles you are imitating, who scatters runes of discord among peoples and princes. We descend from the god of peace, Fro, who bestows fertility. He has set his golden-bristled boar for a sign upon the shields and helmets of us, his sons. I have ever honored him and peace above all."

"Aha, the god Fro," replied the old Duke, now incensed, for he could ill brook hearing his Odin upbraided, "the god Fro will have little cause to rejoice, when he looks down on his descendant dangling from the withered yew, like the long-billed snipe that is caught in a snare. For I ask the assembly,—his own words are the most open expression of guilt,—with what does the law threaten him?"

"The rope—the willow rope!" rang from a thousand voices. "The tree of shame! Hang him! Hang him up at once!"

"But between two dogs: wolves are too good for him."

A look of keen anguish flitted over the King's proud, bold face. He did not fear death, but disgrace. He shuddered slightly. The Duke had watched him intently.

"I, the judge," he now began slowly, "ought not to oppose this sentence, and the guilty man cannot. But consider, spearmen! It will bring little renown to our name among the other peoples, when the rumor spreads among them: a King of the Alemanni is swinging between the clouds and water for treason to the army. You have offered the humble fisherman the straw of hope that the Lofty One might save him from the death of shame, bear him to himself in Valhalla, or even — almost against possibility — after the fulfillment of the deed which you have assigned to him, spare his life.

"Well then, this King's guilt, it is true, is far greater than that caused by the father's love for his child; but honor in him the descendant of the god of harvests! Do not rouse Fro to vengeance, lest for many years he should blast our crops. The god of the boar with golden

bristles is easily angered! And remember, too, with gratitude this man's father."

"A brave hero!" ran from lip to lip.

"He fell in the bloody battle of Strataburg, at the head of the wedge of his district. Fighting gallantly in the van of his people, he at last sank — fell backward on his shield, with many wounds in his breast; for he, the man who had the wild-boar's courage, would not turn his back to the foe. This hero is now looking down from Valhalla upon us; his heart is throbbing anxiously at this impending sentence of disgrace. Alemanni, do not let him behold his son hanging between dogs. Grant the King, as well as the fisherman, a deed of ransom!"

Ebarbold looked up with a grateful glance to the man whom he had so bitterly hated. The people were still silent: their wrath was fierce.

Then: "Suppose he should run away?"

"Suppose he should desert to the Romans in the midst of the battle?"

Two men uttered the questions at the same moment. A deep groan escaped the lips of the defiant King: "No one feared that from the fisherman! They ought not to deem me so

base." He struck his brow with his clenched hand.

Then Ebarvin, his accuser, stepped forward, saying:

"These questions were hard and undeserved. Few among our people will suspect that from the King of the Ebergau. He spoke truly: he might have fled long ago, but he would not escape. I believe him. I have known him ever since he learned to speak: he has never lied. He wants to die, from resentment against the people's league, and perhaps also from remorse and shame."

The King, deeply moved, hastily turned away from the speaker and closed his eyes, but instantly opened them again with a defiant look.

"Well then, I, a free man of unblemished reputation, with broad lands in the Ebergau — I answer for him with life and limb, property and honor. I will swear for him that any deed of arms imposed by the people to ransom him from the rope King Ebarbold will perform, or he will fall upon his shield in doing it."

"I thank you, Ebarvin," said the tortured man, drawing himself up to his full height: this confidence was balm to his inmost soul.

"So be it! So be it!" shouted the multitude before the judge could put the question. "The Duke shall choose the deed!"

"Well then," said the latter without hesitation, "it *is* chosen! In the Roman camp is a hero who is its head and its whole strength; if he fall, all their military power will be broken. Name the man!"

"Saturninus!" echoed from many voices. For the Tribune had repeatedly commanded the Roman troops in Germany, and many of the men now assembled on the Holy Mountain had formerly served beneath the Roman eagles.

"Ebarbold, bring us from the battle the head of Saturninus — and your guilt is pardoned. Will you do this, hero of the boar?"

"I will," replied the latter, with a deep sigh of relief. "Give me my sword; give me my weapons again." The shield-bearer handed him the sheathed sword. Tearing the blade from the scabbard, he held its point toward the sun, saying: "I swear by this blade, the sacred symbol of the one-armed god of war, that, in the next battle, I will slay the Tribune, or fall by his sword."

Loud shouts of applause now burst forth. All, even those whose resentment at first had been most bitter, were heartily glad that, instead of a disgraceful punishment, an honorable deed of ransom had been found for the proud King.

The Duke gazed down at the surging throng with satisfaction.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AFTER allowing the excitement of the multitude time to find vent, the old Duke gave the twelve heralds a sign, and they hurried into the thick grove of oaks rustling behind the ash-tree. Then he struck the shield, saying: "Justice has now been done according to righteous law and the noble will of the people.

"The judge has done his work: now listen to your Duke, army of the Alemanni!"

Deep silence instantly followed: all eyes rested intently upon Hariowald, who sprang up, took the shield from the tree, slipped it on his left arm, and grasping the spear with his right hand, said from the high stone step, his voice, now in a totally different tone, ringing out with mighty resonance over the people:

"Many of you, I know,—and not the worst spearmen,—have silently dissented or openly grumbled because I have so long delayed leading you to battle. The foe was in the land, and we shrank into the forests; he was burning

halls and huts, and we were watching the smoke and flames rise at a distance and remaining inactive. Gradually, even from the farthest districts, the men faithful to the league and obedient to the oath joined us: still the Duke delayed. And meanwhile the enemy was fortifying his camp. Yes, we knew it — any morning from the fortress on the opposite side of the lake the proud galleys might bring almost as many warriors as the camp already contained. Why did the old man still delay? When would he fight?"

"Yes, yes, why delay? When shall we go to battle?" Many voices impatiently repeated.

"He delayed," the Duke went on, his voice rising in tones of thunder, "because he did not wish to strike part, not even half, but all, all, as many as could be reached,— all the murderers, the burners of homes, whom the boy in the imperial purple has again sent from across the lake to attack our free people!

"To-morrow (faithful men reported it to me before the news reached the Roman General), early to-morrow morning the proud galleys will sail across the lake and anchor off the shore close to the camp; and to-morrow, after

midnight, old Hariowald will lead you to storm the camp and the ships at the same time!"

Then the long-repressed battle fury broke out in a terrible tumult; frantic shouts and wild clanking of weapons echoed through the air.

"Look," Hariowald continued, "the heralds are already bearing from the sacred grove of the gods of our country, from the mysterious gloom of the forest darkness, never illumined by a sunbeam, the victorious badges of our tribes and districts which they have taken from the ancient oaks."

A shout of joy, somewhat subdued by reverence, greeted the procession of twelve heralds, who now, in pairs, with measured tread, came from beyond the ash-tree and gave the badges to the representatives of the various districts and clans, who stepped forward from the circle to receive them.

Ebarvin seized the symbol of the Ebergau: the boar's head with threatening tusks fastened to a cross-pole on a lofty spear. Adalo grasped a similar shaft, which supported a pair of huge stag's antlers. Almost all the monsters of the primeval forest and the animals sacred to the gods were used in a similar way. Beside the

huge horns of the aurochs and the bison rose the broad antlers of the elk. Odin's wolf, Donar's bear, and Löki's fox opened their jaws threateningly. Zio's sword, pointing straight upward, surmounted a shaft painted blood-red; another had Donar's hammer between two zigzag red lightnings forged from iron; three lances bore each a horse's head and neck, and from the necks the manes — respectively black, red, and brown — still fluttered. On other poles the bald eagle, the golden eagle, and the Alpine vulture spread their wings and extended their talons in attitudes of menace. A winged dragon carved from wood had been covered with the skins of the ring adder and the copper adder, which rustled in the wind. And as, like the manes of the horses, the hair of the wild beasts had been left hanging in a strip from the head to the tail, and long red, yellow, and blue streamers fluttered from the cross-poles, there was no lack of the rustling, waving motion, to which we moderns are accustomed in banners.

Under these streamers was also many a trophy,—a fragment cut from a captured dragon standard, or a scrap of a purple pennon which the Roman squadrons and cohorts had long

carried under the *labarum* or standard of the cross, for they had abjured the pagan eagles.

When the representatives of the districts and families had received their beloved and honored emblems and returned to the ranks, the Duke went on:

"Hail to you, ancient symbols of conflict and witnesses of victory! Hail and greeting, ye emblems consecrated to the gods! In your presence, looking into the future, seized by the power of the gods invisibly hovering around you, I will venture to utter a prophecy:

"Comrades in arms, Alemanni! do not doubt this time that victory will be ours. You know that it is not the custom of old Hariowald to boast before acting: but this time I predict to you certain, complete, glorious, joyous victory.

"All our gods will unite to aid us to-morrow. Not least of them Löki, the flame-creator. Tents and ships will vanish in fire. The lake nymph will drag many hundreds down in her net. The terrible earth-goddess will open her mysterious bosom, on which the insolent aliens have trodden with iron feet: she will pour forth the avengers, the sons of her coun-

try, into the midst of the enemy's strongest fortress! For the Lofty One blinded the hated foe, so that they chose in our whole district the spot for their camp most fatal to them. And when they fly from the tents to the galleys, amid the terrors of the night, by the flickering glare of their burning fortifications — they will find on the lake the same destruction in fire and blood.

"If the last of the flying ships, with masts and prows half burned, pursued and harried by our swift boats, should really succeed in reaching the southern shore and the harbor fortress from which they sailed forth so victoriously, who knows — I will not say more — who knows whether they may not find there an unexpected doom?

"No! Silence still! Hear me to the end.

"Before I dissolve the assembly and send you all to prepare your weapons in the best way, to polish the points and blades, and to eat and drink enough, — not over much, — then afterwards — do you hear — to seek sleep soon, very soon, for you will have no slumber to-morrow night — hear one thing more: you must make one resolve before this battle!

"Remember, men, how from generation to generation these Romans have sinned against our people; how again and again they have broken faith and treaty; how they will not even grant us the poor land we have wrested from the marsh and the primeval forest; how, in violation of treaties, they have pushed their fortresses farther and farther into our boundaries; how they forced thousands of our ancestors to fight naked and unarmed with wild beasts on the blood-stained sand of their arenas in the city by the Tiber, gloating, safe in their high seats, over the death-agonies of our kinsmen under the paws and rent by the teeth of roaring monsters; how they forced thousands of our young men into their cohorts and made them shed their blood, often far beyond the salt sea!

"Ha, Alemanni of the Black Forest, do you still know how they invited your King Widigab to a banquet and murdered him over the wine-cup? Have you forgotten, Alemanni of the Ebergau, who submitted to them on condition that you should live according to your own laws, how on the smallest pretext, they had your free men scourged by their lictors? Do you still recollect, Alemanni from the

Breisgau, how they asked a peaceful passage through your country, and then encamped near the sacred grove of the goddess Ostara, asked permission to visit the aged priest of eighty and his great-granddaughter, the girl of sixteen, in the grove (it was a General and one of their shaven priests, with a hundred warriors), and inquired what was your most sacred thing? And when the maiden unsuspiciously showed the sacred bronze vessels which the gracious goddess had once sent down to you on the rainbow, how they suddenly seized both, and the Christian priest, before the eyes of the unarmed people, shamefully profaned the sacred vessel; how the General slew the venerable priest and dragged the young priestess away to captivity and disgrace, and how their warriors set fire to the sacred grove?

"Do you still remember, men of the Alpgau, how, in the midst of peace, a centurion dishonored your Count's young wife by her own hearthstone, so that she hanged herself by her girdle?

"Have you forgotten how often they have bound our girls together, yes and our boys, too, like beasts of burden, by their long locks,

and driven them forth to a life of disgrace from which the pure gods of Asgard turn their faces, crimson with shame and wrath?

"You have *not* forgotten these things! I hear it! I see it! Well then, do as I advise: *Take no prisoners!* Kill them all! Do not spare one; disdain all ransom. Let the whole army,—leaders, horse and foot,—be dedicated to Odin and to Zio. You will: I see it! Then repeat the words after me and swear:

> "To thee, Odin, doomed,
> And to wrathful Zio,
> Be all who live within the camp
> And on the rocking galleys.
> Soon will ye bathe in blood,
> O gods so mighty,
> From ankle to knee!"

Swinging their weapons in frantic excitement the gathered thousands repeated the terrible oath.

"I will dismiss the army at once; only hear one thing more—your Duke's vow. The many thousand mailed men who broke into the peaceful districts captured one single prisoner, a defenceless woman, a merry little maiden. Many of you, I think, know her."

"Bissula! The little one! The fair one! The red-elf, Suobert's child!" So shouted hundreds of voices.

"Yes, Bissula, Suobert's daughter. Well then: whoever releases her, whoever brings her to me from the Roman camp after the battle, shall receive the Duke's whole share of the booty."

A grateful but sorrowful glance from Adalo rested upon him: the young noble no longer dared to hope.

"The circle is dissolved, the assembly is over," the old commander continued; he then turned the upright stone resting against the trunk of the tree and descended the steps.

The bands, with loud acclamations for the Duke, instantly scattered in all directions down the sides of the mountain, each division following the symbols borne in front of its own district and tribe.

Adalo was going too; but the Duke motioned to him to remain, took from his hand the stag standard and gave it to Sippilo, who bore it proudly down the Holy Mountain.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"STAY," said Hariowald, when the heralds, last of all, had left the place of assembly, "you must know how this battle is to be fought, according to my plan and wish. For, if the Lofty One should call me up to him before the victory is won, you must complete it. Therefore you must now learn all (far more than the men in the army) that for weeks I have been preparing during sleepless nights, and have secretly accomplished in the past few days.

"Come, sit down by me; we will spread out on this stone the plan of the Roman camp, which we owe to your brave little brother.

"It has been of the greatest service to me. I told you yesterday how the men of the districts were to attack the four sides and gates of the camp at the same time."

"Yes: but you did not say where you would fight with your bands, and where I was to go."

"I? I shall take the shortest way — from beneath."

"No! No! Leave it to me. It is the — most dangerous one."

"Yes, yes," cried the old man, laughing. "And you have no suspicion how dangerous it is. Know then: the ascent cannot be made, as we hoped, first of all and unexpectedly, taking them by surprise; it cannot be made until after the foe, alarmed by the assault on the northern wall, stands ready in full armor."

"Then it will be impossible! But why?"

"Because, as I first learned night before last, the Romans, in digging out the northern ditch, filled up the extreme northern end of the subterranean passage; or else the earth has fallen in, from the jarring. When I entered this passage from the forest outside of the camp—"

"What? you yourself?"

"Yes, I myself; night before last. I advanced only a few steps before I found a heap of earth which had fallen from above, and I was obliged to return. But I stole, on the surface of the earth, so near the ditch that I could look into it from a tree. The whole

ditch — it is now dry again — was brightly lighted by their camp fires. Then I saw that the earth-goddess of our land had blinded the strangers' eyes. They perceived nothing suspicious in the large boulder that bars the continuation of the passage from the ditch into their camp, and they did not roll it away. True, it has not been moved from the spot for decades; for the secret, bequeathed from generation to generation, is known to but two men of the race who bear the emblem of the stag's antlers, and there is rarely an occasion which demands its use. So they did not perceive that the rock had been rolled there by human hands, and they planted one of their banners on the turf which covers it. They have no suspicion of the passage. For look! The plan of the camp shows it; close beside the Nerthus pine, above the altar stones of the Idise, they have pitched a tent filled with provisions and weapons. You see, here!"

"Yes, indeed. The tent is placed exactly over the mouth of the passage. But outside there, in the northern ditch, numerous sentinels are posted — Thracian spearmen alternating with Batavians."

"Yes, that's just it. They must be driven away before I can roll the rock aside and make my way up."

"That will cost blood; it will also require time. The Thracians, and especially the Batavians, are their very best troops. Alas, if it happen to be the turn of the Batavians. They are not inferior to us in heroic courage."

"No matter! They must fall before the badger can enter the old burrow."

"And then — after the battle has summoned all our foes to arms — then you will? Let me go in your place!"

"Obey! You will find work enough at the southern gate, the lake gate. When we have stormed the camp, the whole flood of those who still remain alive will pour to the ships through the southern gate. They must not be allowed to reach the lake in close order, to turn the tide of battle against us there at the last. You will meet them as they burst through the southern gate, and drive them back into the burning camp, or scatter them. They must not be allowed to reach the lake from the camp as reinforcements to the defenders of the galleys, but to increase their alarm. This is your task:

Saturninus, if he live, will make it hard enough for you."

"So my post will be at the southern gate?"

"Yes; and to it I have sent, if by any means she can reach it — Bissula!"

"Thanks!"

"Do not thank me! For I forbid you to fight for the girl; you must fight solely for victory. Yet have no anxiety. If she is still alive, she will be rescued. I have relieved Zercho and Sippilo from every other duty, and given them only one charge — to find and protect the young girl. But you I need for higher work. I fear one man only in the whole army," he added in a lower tone — "Saturninus. He is like the old leaders they had in their better days, the days of which my grandfather and father told me with horror, when it was almost impossible for the most heroic courage to defeat a Roman army. Who knows whether Ebarbold will strike him down? We must let the King have the first chance; he has the prior claim: but if the Roman should be the one who survives and I do not reach and kill him after the King's fall, before you (I shall make every effort to do it), do you, son of Adalger, provide

that Saturninus shall not lead his army in closed ranks down to the lake: detain him as long as you can stand."

"As long as I can! But I wondered when you set the fisherman his task. If the Roman galleys cross the lake here, how can you know whether he will be able to reach them from the shore? They will anchor, not come to the land. How is Fiskulf to get from the storming of the Roman camp here?"

"He will not share the assault," replied Hariowald, laughing, as he stroked his beard complacently. "And he will not go by land to the galley, but by the lake."

"Swimming?"

"No, rowing. Know what no one has yet learned; for crowds are garrulous. Besides the most distant Alemanni districts, I have secretly won as allies the Hermunduri, who drink the water of the Main, and induced them to send us reinforcements for this war. You supposed that the boats in the two forest-covered swamps on the east and west of the Idisenhang were filled solely with people unable to bear arms, after I had brought most of the men here? No, my friend! The boats, almost three hundred, in the

two marshes are not empty of men. The women and children are to be put ashore to-night; more than two thousand Alemanni and Hermunduri will leap into the boats. From left and right, from east and west, they will float in the stillness and darkness of the night against the high-decked galleys, and as soon as the first torch is hurled into the Roman camp on the Idisenhang, our boats will attack the Roman ships from the open lake and from left and right. Aha, do you think our fishing boats will be like nutshells against those giants? Probably: but have you never seen a flock of brave little swallows put a sparrow hawk to flight? Our skiffs are small, it is true; but more than two hundred against sixty. And the pitch and resin of the pine-trees in the forests by the lake, blazing in a thousand faggots of dry twigs, will burn merrily in the linen sails and the rigging of the triremes."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"YOU have planned all this alone?" asked the young noble.

"Ha, more, far more than this! Like the wolf of hell, this Rome opens her jaws to swallow all Mittelgard. What? They are not willing to grant us land enough on the northern shore of the lake to feed our growing population? Well, let us see whether, in punishment to the insatiable robbers for new and old crimes, the gods will not deprive them even of the districts they have hitherto held by force,—the northern shore!"

Adalo's astonishment was increasing.

"Their proud giant ships will float against us from Arbor to-morrow; those which escape the midnight conflagration will not, I hope, be received again, when they fly homeward, in the eyrie whence these birds of prey went forth."

"What! Arbor?"

"I have long tried to persuade our eastern districts also to make common cause with us;

they did not refuse reinforcements to the league, as people here suppose because they did not see the men of the eastern provinces. Besides,"—he smiled craftily,—"most of the eastern districts have kings. It was not necessary to have all these kings here, when Ebarbold's fate was to be decided. Meanwhile, they will help where I sent them: on the southern shore. But not they alone.

"We wished to free the brothers of our race still enslaved by Rome. For a long time the Alemanni and the other colonists—more slaves than free men—have borne, grinding their teeth, the yoke which every year pressed heavier. But they were held in check by the fortresses on the other side, from the Linden Island behind Brigantium, beyond Arbor and Constantia. They had long been ready to fight, but the lake fortresses seemed to be too strongly garrisoned. They dread these fortifications from long experience. They required to have aid from us.

"Well: least of all now, with the Emperor so near and a Roman army on the northern shore, least of all now, do the tyrants fear an attack upon their fortresses in the south. To-morrow

nearly all the soldiers who usually guard Arbor will come across on the ships to share the gay expedition for booty; only a small guard will be left behind. But as soon as the camp on the Idisenhang is burning,—a magnificent torch, kindled by Zio himself,—the infuriated colonists will attack Arbor from the land side. Thousands of free Alemanni from the eastern districts will aid; they have stolen in small parties through the mountain passes from far, far beyond Brigantium, and remained hidden in the forests and farm-houses of the colonists for the last two days. At the same time our men from the eastern marshes (Suomar commands them) in thirty boats, under cover of the darkness (this is why I could not move while the moon-goddess was in the sky), will go to Arbor, burst the chains of the harbor, and unless the Christian God should descend from the clouds to save the fortress, the morning sun will see the free and the enslaved Alemanni on the walls of Arbor.

"Many times already we have won it, plundered it, half burned it, and then left it, so that the Romans could establish themselves there again: we will be so foolish no longer. If we conquer this time, we will remain there for-

ever! Then one link of the iron chain will be broken, and we shall find it easier to subdue the other fortresses at the left and the right, from Brigantium to Constantia.

"I shall not live to see the day, but you will, young warrior, the day when the southern shore of the lake and the country far, far into the lofty mountains whose peaks are crowned with eternal snows, will be the possession of the free Alemanni: then think of this hour and old Hariowald."

He started up, intensely moved, his white hair and silver beard waving proudly in the breeze.

"My Duke," cried Adalo enthusiastically, "this is magnificent! Speak, when to-morrow we have won this great victory according to your plans, will you not then, instead of Count, bear the name of *King* of the Linzgau and the Ebergau, if Ebarbold fall?"

"No," replied the old man quietly, "that would not be wise. I have reflected upon it a long time. Odin's will, I think, is different for our people. Ebarbold has no descendants: after his death I will propose that they shall not elect another king.

"That will be well; for the time is close at hand, though, it is true, not yet fully here, when one king, a single one, will gather all the districts of the Alemanni under his rule. The path will be more open, easier for this universal king to traverse, the fewer kings and the more counts rule the districts. We two will smooth, not block, the path for the future king of the people. No, no! And, besides, the men of the Ebergau must not say: 'Ebarbold was forced to fall because Hariowald wished to be called King.'

"That king of the people is coming! Then, it is true, the nation will scarcely remember me or you. Only perhaps some harper, in the hall of the One King, will sing how Hariowald, the old chief and Adalo, the young one, defeated the Romans three times in a single night. But we, Adalo, shall then look down upon the free land of the Alemanni, stretching from the Alps to the Vosges. We shall look down from Odin's table. And I may probably expect that, when I cross the threshold of Valhalla, the Lofty One will rise from his throne and come to meet me, with the drinking-horn in his hand. For many men — far more through my counsel,

which always advised war, than by my spear — have I sent up to him by the red death in the last fifty years, to fill his hall and increase his army. Yes, my Adalo, we shall then look down upon the glory of our people and say, laughing joyously: 'We two also helped to build it that night on the Idisenhang.'

"So, Adalo, so I praise you: your cheek is glowing, your eye is flashing! That is the right spirit, Odin's spirit, which is now taking possession of you. And that alone, that ardor for battle, will also give you the most ardent desire of your heart; not the dull despair of the last few days, in which, unhappy youth, you sent that secret message to the two Roman Generals!

"Hush! Of course I knew it. It was not difficult to guess the contents of the letter you forwarded after they had disdained everything else you had to give. But I also knew positively that they would refuse you too. That is the sole reason I allowed your messenger to pass through the barricades, as you thought, undetected. I too would gladly see her at liberty, the wild red rosebud of the hillside by the lake, the red flower in our people's garland of oak-leaves. But your Bissula is yonder, with

victory, in the Roman camp. If you want her, hew her out at the same hour with conquest and the salvation of your people.

"No, do not thank me; do not talk! Go now! I must be alone."

CHAPTER XL.

MEANWHILE, incidents of grave moment had occurred in the Roman camp.

The friendly feeling between the two Roman Generals had become strained, and Bissula's ingenuousness toward both was transformed into fear and distrust. The two friends, once so intimately associated, avoided each other and confined their intercourse and conversation solely to matters absolutely required by the service. At the same time the prisoner, now suspiciously watchful, perceived in Ausonius a resentful bitterness toward the Tribune, very alien to his usual good-nature. The latter, on the other hand, evidently was not angry; even in his cool reserve he seemed to spare his older friend, nay, to treat him with a sort of compassion.

The little maid herself was very unhappy. Her careless unconsciousness was completely destroyed, and she did not know which of the two men whose friendship seemed to be broken,

if not by her, on her account, she ought to avoid with the greater fear. This feeling grieved the kind-hearted girl. She was also burdened by anxiety about the future, by dread of the unknown, by rebelliousness — when she was powerless and fully aware of it — against the restraint imposed by the will of strangers upon her obstinacy, all threatening her immediately. For, however the two Romans differed in everything else concerning the prisoner, they seemed to unite in one thing: Bissula should never again be free, never return to the forest hut by the lake, to the familiar scenes of the neighborhood.

At these thoughts tears filled the eyes once so saucy or so proud. How sadly she admitted to herself that her own folly and defiance were the sole causes which had brought all this misfortune upon her! How kind, how prudent, how loyal Adalo's advice had been! Yet these tears, burning, bitter tears of remorse, nay, yearning, were a relief. Even now, in the trouble for which she alone was to blame, he had not abandoned her! The first greeting that reached her from her people had come from him; he had sent the young brother whom he loved so fondly, and whom therefore she

loved for his sake, and Bruna too, her old playfellow.

She had dissembled craftily before the soldiers, and wondered loudly at the animal's "friendliness." But, as soon as she was alone in her tent with the faithful beast, she clasped the huge head tenderly with both white arms, kissed the broad forehead and lovingly patted the neck of the bear, who growled affectionately in reply. Then she slipped her hand through the collar, felt a depression in it, drew it up from the shaggy skin to the light of the Roman lamp, perceived characters scrawled on it, and read: "Through the gate to the lake."

Her heart throbbed warmly. So her friends had already consulted about her escape! They were giving her the safest direction, the part of the camp where her companions would wait for her. But they could not possibly mean that she should try to make her way now, without further delay, through the lake gate, that is, through the "Porta Decumana," so closely guarded day and night. Not now! But when?

Evidently as soon as something happened which would render escape possible; then she was to choose that direction. But what was to

happen? An attack of the Alemanni? Ausonius laughed at it. Even cautious Saturninus had said: "Unless they fly over it like the swallows that are now preparing for departure, they will not come into this solid camp."

So she racked her little brains, pondering over all sorts of possibilities which might bring her liberty against or with the will of the Romans. Should she appeal to Ausonius again? No!

A strange timidity had taken possession of her ever since her last interview with him. She had never cherished any affection for the clever, eloquent man except the feeling a daughter has for a father; but recently, in making the proposal to take her with him, his eyes had rested on her so strangely. Never had he looked at her so before. It was like the gaze Saturninus fixed upon her when he seized her outside of the forest hut — but never again, not even when he told her that she belonged to him and he would not release her.

So it happened that the sensitive girl, alarmed by the suddenly discovered ardor of the older man, felt safer and more at ease with the younger but undemonstrative one. She avoided Ausonius; she almost sought Saturninus, to

whom, at the beginning and during the whole course of her captivity, she had learned to be grateful as to a watchful guardian.

Often and often, since reading Bruna's message, she walked toward the lake gate, without hoping to find it unwatched or carelessly guarded,— the Tribune kept too strict a rule, too sharp an oversight for that,— but to impress upon her mind the exact locality of the streets and tents which might afford a hiding-place near the gate where she might await, close at hand, the most favorable moment.

She had soon chosen for this purpose a towering heap of beams, gabions, and boards piled one above another, which had not been used in building the camp and had been left here: it rose high above her head, and when behind it, she was concealed from the view of those at the gate or in the street between the tents. But she never lingered long at the spot, lest she might arouse suspicion.

Bissula sought from preference the opposite side of the camp, facing the north, where the lofty pine-tree of the earth-goddess rose beside the broad sacrificial stones of the altar, spreading out its mighty branches, and from above

the wall the eye could rove freely over the forests to the distant peaks where, veiled by mists, the Holy Mountain towered. Her thoughts always flew thither, not to the eastern marshes, not to Suomar. She was often anxious about her grandmother, but Zercho had certainly concealed her; and now that "the obstinate redhead" could no longer say no, probably on the Holy Mountain.

"Therefore"—this was the excuse she willingly made to herself—"*therefore* I cannot help thinking constantly of the Holy Mountain. Oh no! That isn't true. It is not for my grandmother's sake. Adalo, Adalo, help!"

So she had called aloud the evening after the refusal to set her at liberty, perched high among the branches of the pine-tree into which she liked to climb to dream alone, and at the same moment stretched her beautiful arms, with a gesture of longing entreaty, toward the northwest, where lightning was flashing over the mountain peaks.

On the evening after the inspection (it was the day of the assembly on the Holy Mountain) she walked through the streets of the camp, thinking and dreaming of her liberation,

also of her liberator. She had tied faithful Bruna firmly to the poles of her tent; for there had repeatedly been serious trouble when she took the animal with her: boys belonging to the camp followers pelted her with stones, from safe hiding-places, till she was greatly infuriated.

To Ausonius's nephew, especially, the bear showed intense antipathy, rising on her hind legs and growling furiously whenever she saw him, though he anxiously kept out of her way and never teased her. Only with the utmost difficulty, by clasping her arms around the animal, had she prevented Bruna from attacking him.

"Your she-bear understands Latin," said Saturninus, who had sprung to help her, smiling. "She knew what Herculanus said when he swore that some day she should pay in the amphitheatre at Rome, under the teeth of his Thessalian dogs, for the mischief she meant to do him here."

"Bruna in Rome?" the girl cried defiantly. "No more—than Bissula in Burdigala!" But as she spoke she almost wept from rage, hate, and fear.

CHAPTER XLI.

OPPRESSED by sad yearning and anxiety, the usually light-hearted child had again walked this evening from her tent to the lake gate, and thence, driven back by the shouts of the Thracian sentries, wandered through the whole camp to her beloved pine-tree, which had begun to supply the place of the oak beside her forest home: for the tree of the earth-goddess also afforded a convenient ascent like a stairway on its broad branches drooping to the sacrificial stones, while on the central trunk was a hiding-place invisible from below, with a comfortable back, and the beloved view over the Roman fortifications to the mountain peaks rising in the distance.

The sun had set long before, and darkness gathered quickly in that region as soon as the glowing ball had vanished behind the wooded western shores of the lake. There was no moon; only a few stars were in the sky.

The wind bore to her ears from the distance

scattered sounds: the neighing of a horse, the rattle of a weapon, the shout of a sentinel at the gate. Oh, those guards, who also watched her here in her spacious prison, prevented her escape, her return to her people — for how much longer? Sorrow overpowered her, and she felt that tears were about to flow. But her tyrants should not see them; she would weep her fill, up above there!

Bissula glided lightly up and sat so still in her hiding-place among the boughs that a belated bird — a blackbird — perched for the night, without seeing her, a few branches above her head.

Then the girl saw two men step cautiously from behind corner tents, each at the end of a street running in opposite directions across the camp; they made signs to each other, gazed carefully behind and sideways, then hurried forward and met directly under the pine-tree on its northern side, so that the huge trunk completely concealed them from the camp.

Bissula bent softly, softly downward: it was a man with a helmet and one unarmed; she could not distinguish their features. They began to talk, in whispers, it is true, but the listener

understood many words, and she now recognized the speakers by their voices.

"But I tell you, it must be this very day! He has ordered the scribe to come early tomorrow morning, with the seal. He means to change his will — to add a codicil. What good will his death do me, if he first throws the best part of his riches into that wench's lap?"

The other made some reply which the girl did not hear.

"Ha! — she — she can't be reached!" answered the first speaker. "That red-haired witch is under the protection of the fiends of hell."

"How so?"

"Why, one night lately — a deadly terror has seized me ever since when I see the brown beast — the monster's hot, loathsome breath was steaming from her open jaws into my face! She was within a hair's breadth of clutching and squeezing me to death! This very evening — just now — at supper —"

"Hark, what was that," asked the other startled, "up above in the pine-tree? Didn't you hear anything?"

"Pshaw! The night-breeze in the branches!"

"No, no! It was—"

"Well, it was that bird! There it flies!"

The startled blackbird, loudly uttering its cry of fear and warning, flew upward; the listener, in her horror, had pressed her hand upon her throbbing heart and, by the slight movement, frightened the bird perched so near her.

"Well then, by Tartarus, I will risk it! He complained again to-day, before many witnesses, of fever and all sorts of pains. Have you hemlock enough? Shall I give you my vial? I brought it with me. Here, I always carry it in my breast."

"Enough for six uncles!"

"But the stuff must have a suspicious taste: sharp, bitter. Suppose he should notice it too soon?"

"That's why I mixed the other half with honey. But take good care of your store. Perhaps Prosper, in case he has any suspicion, must also—"

"Or the Barbarian girl, if the will has already—"

"Let us go," the other interrupted.

"Put it in the Emperor's goblet! He drinks from no other.—Quick: I go to the left."

"And I go to the right."

The voices died away, and the footsteps echoed from two directions.

Horrified, almost paralyzed with terror, Bissula slipped down from the tree. On reaching the ground she staggered, clinging to the trunk for support, and for a moment wondered whether she had not fallen asleep and dreamed. She could not realize, could not believe that such a deed was possible. His own nephew — that kind-hearted man!

And yet it was true. Haste was necessary. The hour for the meal had already come, and Ausonius always began by drinking from the Emperor's goblet, with the three beautiful female figures, to the health of the Emperor Gratianus.

Those two men had the start, too, and it was a considerable distance from this extreme northwestern corner of the camp to the Prætorium in the south. Turning, she ran as swiftly as she could, but had only reached the corner of the nearest street of tents when she shrieked aloud in terror. An iron hand grasped her arm.

"Help!" she screamed despairingly. "Help! Help for Ausonius!"

"Why are you shrieking like a dying leveret, little one?" replied a deep voice. "Where are you going so fast?"

"Let me go, whoever you may be! The Prefect's life is in danger! Who are you?"

"I am Rignomer. I followed you unnoticed till you climbed the tree. You wouldn't have seen me now, if you hadn't dashed away as though you were driven by the elves. Where are you going?"

"To the Prefect! They want to murder him!"

"Oh, nonsense, what are you talking about? Who?"

"Don't ask! Come with me! Hurry! Alas, perhaps even now it is too late."

The Batavian yielded to this unmistakable despair. Without removing his hand from her arm, he ran beside her.

"Where is the Tribune?" asked Bissula.

"With the Prefect: some news has come from Arbor."

"The gods be thanked. He is the only one who can help!"

On they ran through the streets of the camp, now perfectly dark except where fires were glim-

mering at the corners. Suddenly Bissula fell. The German dragged her up.

"A tent rope! You must keep more in the middle. But you are limping! Did you hurt yourself?"

"A little. Keep on."

But she reeled; her feet refused to carry her.

"Now it's lucky that I caught you," said the soldier, swinging her on his arm like a child. And Bissula, who usually so fiercely resisted every touch, willingly permitted it.

"Throw your arms around my neck, little one! There. Now hold fast! It won't be long" ("unfortunately" he thought, but took good care not to say it), "we shall reach there directly." And he pressed on swiftly and sturdily with his light, beautiful burden.

CHAPTER XLII.

A SLENDER bluish flame, burning in a marble vessel supported by a bronze pedestal of exquisite Corinthian workmanship, diffused both light and perfume through the Prefect's sumptuously furnished and richly decorated tent. Ausonius was lying on the low couch: before him stood the Tribune. Prosper, the old freedman, was pushing forward the citrus wood dining-table, which ran on rollers.

Herculanus entered, greeted all present pleasantly and took his place on the second couch, opposite to Ausonius. "Where is Davus?" he asked the freedman impatiently. "I am thirsty!"

"He ought to have been here long ago," replied Prosper. "He often wanders about needlessly, nobody knows where. You must have him put in the block again, patronus."

"What," cried Ausonius laughing, "have you actually dragged the block here, you rigid

slave-overseer, all the way from Vindonissa?"

"Three fine ones, patronus. If you take bad slaves with you, I must take good blocks."

Saturninus was about to go: "The business of the service is over for to-day, Prefect. Perhaps Nannienus may arrive with the galleys to-morrow. He sent a swift galley across the lake to-day: he will arrive very soon. Then, at last, we can begin our work without delay. But," he added in a kindly tone, advancing a step nearer to the lectus, "Will you permit me to utter a word of warning, Prefect Prætor of Gaul? Yesterday, and to-day still more, you complained of illness; chills followed by short attacks of fever: will you not remain here in the camp to-morrow (Bissula shall nurse you), instead of marching with us into the swampy forests? I fear you already have the marsh fever."

Just at that moment Davus entered, bringing the beautiful mixing-vessel, filled, and several empty goblets.

"Davus, you lazy hound!" shouted Herculanus. "Quick! I am thirsty! Wine!"

But Saturninus, bending anxiously over the reclining figure, went on: "Acid old Cæcubian

is said to be a good remedy for this fever. May I send you some from my store, Prefect?"

But Ausonius still remained silent. Contradictory feelings had been struggling for mastery in his soul since the Illyrian's last words. On the one hand his resentment was very vehement against the obstinate soldier who, for some incomprehensible whim, opposed the dearest wish of his heart. But even during these days of constraint Saturninus had treated him so respectfully, while he himself had been very harsh to his old friend. And he loved the gallant General so warmly! And now this touching, unfeigned solicitude for his health conquered the kind heart of Ausonius.

"Saturninus! Your affection does me good. My nephew thinks only of one disease — his own thirst! The business of the service, Tribune, is probably over; but I entreat you to stay as my guest. Let us forget what briefly estranged us, and remember our beautiful old friendship."

Saturninus quickly grasped the outstretched hand and pressed it warmly: "There your heart spoke, Ausonius! I thank you. I will stay gladly." He took his place on the third lectus,

which was at the rear of the tent opposite to the entrance and at the right of the two others. "You ought to have known long ago that my sole wish is your welfare, your real happiness."

Just at that moment Davus came from the table beside the entrance, where the wine was poured, toward his master. He walked very slowly, for he carried three goblets, all filled: two small ones on a silver salver in his right hand, and the large imperial beaker in his left. With his face turned to the entrance and his back to Saturninus, he had poured the wine from the small amphora at the table and then added spring water from the mixing-vessel.

Herculanus hastily started up, snatched one of the goblets from the salver and emptied it at one draught. His uncle cast a look of disapproval at him, saying, "Could you not wait for my toast?" Then he took the Emperor's goblet with the three graces. Davus carried the last cup to the Illyrian and set the silver salver on the table.

"The first draught," said Ausonius, "is usually to the noble Emperor, to whom I owe this beautiful gift. But to-day Gratianus may wait;

to-day I drink first to our friendship, my Saturninus!"

"And all that your heart most ardently desires," added the latter smiling.

Ausonius raised the goblet.

Just at that moment the curtain at the door of the tent was dragged violently back from the outside: Bissula, her face corpselike in its pallor, her hair fluttering wildly around her, and blood streaming from her bare right arm, rushed in, shrieking:

"Poison! Do not drink, Ausonius!" She fell forward headlong on the Prefect's couch.

Herculanus sprang up with the speed of lightning, to snatch the cup from his uncle's hand and pour its contents on the ground. But, before he reached him, the Tribune, who had dropped his own goblet, clutched him with a grasp of iron. In spite of his violent struggles, Herculanus could not move forward an inch. Davus, the old freedman running at his heels, darted toward the entrance. Prosper shouted loudly, but Davus went no farther than the door; for here he encountered the Batavian, Rignomer, who seized him by the throat and held him fast.

Ausonius, horrified and bewildered, had set the goblet on the table before him, and now raised Bissula's head. "Poison?" he asked sorrowfully. "Poison me? Who?"

"The dog of a slave, of course!" cried Herculanus, struggling furiously in the Illyrian's hold. "Are you in league with Davus, Tribune? Why do you prevent me from punishing the scoundrel?" And now he actually succeeded in releasing his right hand and gripping the dagger in his belt.

"Don't let him go," shrieked Bissula, who had now recovered her senses. "He is the instigator!"

Just at that moment, summoned by Prosper, who had rushed out screaming for help, two Thracians on guard before the Prefect's tent, and two Illyrians who chanced to be passing, came in and, by the Tribune's orders, seized Herculanus and the slave, who, pale and trembling, could scarcely stand.

Ausonius, groaning aloud, sank back on his pillows.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SATURNINUS, no longer occupied with his prisoner, stepped forward into the centre of the tent, saying: "In the name of the Emperor Gratianus! As General and Commander of this camp I open the investigation. Speak, girl! You, a slave, a captive Barbarian, are making a terrible charge against a Roman leader. Weigh your words! Death is the penalty for false accusation of such a deed."

But Bissula did not shrink. She had now recovered her strength and calmness, and gave no thought to herself; her mind was occupied solely with the old friend who lay sighing on his cushions, and who had never been so dear to her as in the helplessness of his anguish. Briefly, clearly, and simply she related the conversation between the two men, to which, in the boughs of the pine-tree, she had been an involuntary listener.

"Miserable lies," shrieked Herculanus, stamping his foot. "The wench wants to become

my uncle's wanton and ruin his nephew, the heir. The whole story is an invention,—the entire tale of hiding in the tree! When I came in here she stood watching beside the tent."

"That is a base falsehood," said Rignomer, stepping forward. "I swear that she has just come down from the tree: I had been following her—unseen—for half an hour."

"Aha, do you hear, uncle? Another lover!" sneered Herculanus.

"No," said the Tribune, "it was done by my order."

But Rignomer had flushed crimson with rage and shame. Shaking his clenched fist at Herculanus, he said, laughing grimly: "Just wait—you fellow with your patched mantle. The child came down from the tree before my eyes. I was standing, hidden by the tent, six paces opposite to it. Two men came from the right and left, glided under the pine, whispered together, and then separated."

Davus grew even paler than before; he tottered and would have fallen but for the hands which grasped him. But Herculanus asked defiantly: "Did you recognize the two men in the dark?

Or, at six paces distance, understand their whispers?"

"Neither. But the child slid down the tree directly after in the most frantic terror, called 'Murder! They will poison Ausonius!' and ran with me here. The last part of the way I carried her."

"So the two Barbarians conspired against me!" cried Herculanus.

Saturninus went up to the slave, who hung with shaking knees between the two Thracians. "You know what terrible tortures threaten the slave who tries to murder his own master?"

Davus sank to the ground; the two men could scarcely drag him up again.

"Well then! What matters your miserable body! I will secure your safety of life and limb —in the Emperor's name—you shall merely go to the lead mines, if you confess at once."

"Thank you, my lord, a thousand thanks," groaned the slave. "Yes, yes. It is all as they say. For a year he has been tempting and urging! The demon of gold blinded me. It is all true!"

"Ha," shouted Herculanus, struggling against

his guards, "so the slave, too, is in the conspiracy against me?"

"Give the wine in the Emperor's goblet to a dog, and see how long it will live," said Davus. "It is hemlock! In my tunic — feel there — I have a small vial which contains the rest."

"I don't doubt it: poison in the goblet — the same poison in the vial. Of course," cried Herculanus with an angry laugh, "the slave put it into both. But Ausonius will not die until he has altered his will and disinherited his nephew; for the Barbarian girl appeared just at the right moment as a deliverer."

Meanwhile the Tribune had taken from the slave's breast a little amber vial and placed it on the table beside the goblet. Ausonius glanced at it mournfully; he seemed to recognize it.

"And what he put in there," Herculanus went on, "is to convict me?"

"No," cried Davus, now angered, "you shall convict yourself. Tribune, feel in his tunic too; he has the same poison, in a similar vial, hidden there. Could I force him to do it? Or could I conjure it there by magic?"

Herculanus turned pale. Defiance, the hope of life, deserted him and, gnashing his teeth, he

struggled fiercely in the Illyrians' grasp. But the latter held him firmly while their countryman, Saturninus, took from his tunic a similar amber vial and placed it beside the first one.

"Then go to Orcus together! I wish you all had poison in you!" shrieked Herculanus.

But Ausonius tore his gray locks, wailing: "Alas! alas! I know them well. I gave them myself, both vials, to my dear sister, his mother. Alas, my own sister's son! To murder me! For miserable money! I had left it all to him. Only I should have been glad to live a few years longer."

Weeping aloud, he covered his face. Bissula, kneeling before him, stroked his hands compassionately.

"No doubt is possible," said Saturninus, "even without the confession made by his fury."

"Oh! The son of my dearest sister, my Melania!" moaned the Prefect.

"I had long suspected him," the Tribune said. "But the scoundrel did not desire to murder you alone; he wanted to kill this child too, to whom all are attached."

"What? What?" cried Ausonius. Bissula also started.

"That is why he hastened in advance of us all, alone, to her dwelling, on her track. He had raised his sword for a deadly blow when I caught his arm."

"What? Horrible!" cried Ausonius.

"Yes, that is true; but," the girl went on kindly and truthfully, "but then he had not yet recognized me as his uncle's friend."

"Yes, yes," groaned the Prefect. "He told me himself that a red hair had put him on your track. How often I had described you to him! And, as soon as he saw you he recognized you instantly. He wanted to bring you to me; and he—"

"And yesterday night," Rignomer put in wrathfully, "he stole into her tent with an unsheathed dagger. Unfortunately one who should have guarded it was sleeping, but the she-bear was awake, and"—he swiftly spread the full mantle open—"she tore out a piece here as he fled."

"*This* piece," said Saturninus, drawing it from his girdle and laying it on the fresh patch; "you see it fits exactly."

"The Furies' curse on you all!" screamed Herculanus.

"Away with them both!" the Tribune com-

manded. "Prosper, two of your slave-blocks! It won't do to leave them guarded in an open tent. That is always unsafe and requires the constant presence of trustworthy men, whom we cannot spare. Rignomer, you will lock them in — both feet — apart from each other. Your life will answer for it if they escape on the way."

"They shall not," growled the Batavian, who had been inexpressibly enraged by the fling at his love for Bissula, though he did not know why. "Forward!"

Led by Rignomer, the four guards and Prosper thrust the prisoners out of the tent.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE curtains had scarcely dropped behind them when Ausonius exclaimed: "He must not die! My Melania's son! He must fly into exile!"

"The Emperor will decide. But you, friend Ausonius, praise Heaven, which sent you this child. You owe your life solely to her."

The Prefect drew the young girl to the couch by his side and kissed her hands and brow. She submitted, for she was weeping. He would fain have kissed her lips too, but he forebore. The usually defiant creature was so childlike, so helpless from sheer emotion over his escape. So he only stroked her beautiful head with his hand and said, deeply moved himself: "The Christians have a superstition which I have often derided, of a guardian angel which God gives to mortals. I shall never do so again. You, Bissula, are my guardian angel!"

"But angels ought not to be slaves," remarked the Illyrian with a smile which well became his

manly face. "I give you this child, Ausonius; she is your slave now. Do with her as you choose."

"I set her free, this moment. Bissula, you are free!"

"Oh, thanks, thanks, thanks!" cried the young girl exultantly, springing from the couch. "Now away,—away at once to my people,—to my grandmother,—to—"

"Not so fast, little one," interposed Saturninus. "Even the faithful, grateful freedwoman (the legal form of the act is still lacking) must obey the will of the patronus. I doubt whether he will let you fly away, you lovely little wild bird."

Bissula fixed her wonderful eyes beseechingly, imploringly, upon Ausonius, but the latter did not see it; he was gazing, rigid with amazement, at the Tribune.

"My friend—I don't understand you. Why do you so suddenly—I almost thought that you yourself—"

"Let us spare the child. I will say only this much; she can hear it without flushing too deeply, and sudden blushes are so becoming to her! A man need not be a poet, my Ausonius,

to find our — pardon me, your — little maid very, very charming. I don't deny it; the first time I saw her — well, she certainly would displease no one! But I soon told myself what the duty of friendship commanded, and remembered that my life belongs wholly to the god of war. I ordered my heart to calm my blood. They belong to a soldier, and instantly obeyed."

At these words Bissula, in spite of the warning, or perhaps on account of it, had flushed crimson and glided away from the two men. She was just slipping out of the tent; but Saturninus gently caught her by the hair, held her firmly, laughing merrily, and said: "Stay, little one. The worst is over now, at any rate from me."

"But why," Ausonius went on, "have you all this time — Even yesterday —"

"Because I suspected your nephew's murderous designs, though only against her. I could protect her solely as her master. If she had remained, as you desired, in your tent, he could have killed the unguarded girl at any hour of the day or night. I watched her for you! Now it is no longer necessary. Obey your heart. I will leave you alone."

"Yes, but what more is to be done?" asked Bissula plaintively, holding the Tribune — she did not know why — firmly by the arm. "I am so tired!" she added. "Let me go to sleep now. And to-morrow, away! Back to my people!"

"Yes, my noble friend," said Ausonius, with a certain solemnity, slowly rising from his couch, "stay! I myself desire it. You shall be the first witness: my resolution is formed, unalterable! Bissula, I owe my life to you: in return there is but one reward — this life, my life itself."

The girl drew back in terror. She did not understand him.

"A slave was of course impossible. To wed even his own freedwoman is against the law for a Senator; but I shall undoubtedly receive a dispensation from the Emperor, and I care nothing for the jests of my colleagues."

"What do you want to do with me?" asked the young girl anxiously.

"Except the Cæsar," Ausonius went on thoughtfully, "no man in the Western Empire stands above me; only two are of equal rank. I am Praefectus Praetorio of Gaul. Nay, more,

— no one knows it yet, not even you, my Saturninus, — the Emperor has promised me next year the highest honor in the Roman State. This coming year will take its name from me."

"You are to be Consul?" cried the Tribune, reverently.

"What is it? What does it mean?" asked the poor girl, now thoroughly frightened. The solemnity, and the numerous Roman names of dignities were becoming more and more mysterious.

But Ausonius, nodding complacently, continued: "And no living poet is my peer. Bissula, you shall share all this with me. To-morrow you shall go with me to Vindonissa to the Emperor. Yes, yes, don't shake your defiant little head, you shall be with me all my life, for I, Ausonius, Ausonius of Burdigala, will make you my wife!"

He now drew himself up to his full height, stretching both arms to her. With glowing cheeks, throbbing heart, and eyes flashing with shame and fear and wrath, Bissula, crimsoning more and more deeply, had listened to the last words and gazed in horror at the approaching

Roman. Now she uttered a loud shriek: "No! No! Never!"

Wrenching herself from Saturninus, who tried to hold her, she sprang out of the tent. Outside, panting for breath, she ran as fast as her little feet would carry her, through the dark silent camp, reached her tent, unfastened Bruna, led her in, pressed her down on the ground, flung herself beside her and, bursting into a torrent of tears, buried her face in the soft thick fur.

The faithful, intelligent animal doubtless knew that something was wrong. Licking the girl's fingers, the bear growled, a low, soft, tender growl, like a mother soothing her sick child. The monotonous, droning tone produced a drowsy influence like a lullaby. So, under the protection of the bear, though often sobbing vehemently, Bissula at last fell asleep.

BOOK THREE

THE FREEDWOMAN

CHAPTER XLV.

AUSONIUS was deeply grateful to his preserver, certainly; and he had wished to bestow a transcendent reward. Yet he was very keenly exasperated by this rude, fierce, foolish, nay, ungrateful disdain. And before the Tribune, too — the younger man.

This exasperation took full possession of him even amidst his deep grief for his nephew's crime. From the day of his birth neither the fates nor men had often denied any wish of this spoiled favorite of Fortune. Even the desire for poetic talent had been granted by the Muses, and, as he believed, in lavish abundance; while his contemporaries denied him no recognition, but lavished on him every

honor for which he longed in any department. His imperial pupil loaded him with the highest dignities and honors in the gift of the State; he was one of the richest, most highly educated men in the Western Empire; he was agreeable, vivacious, well-bred, almost handsome in feature, and not yet very old. Thousands of the most aristocratic Roman women would have considered themselves fortunate if —

And this Barbarian girl refused him! It was incomprehensible, and he determined not to tolerate this "folly."

As she did not appear at breakfast at the usual hour, he sent Prosper for her. The old man returned without having accomplished his errand. Bissula was not in her tent, and could not be found anywhere in the camp.

Ausonius was startled. Then he said to himself: "Oh, nonsense. She cannot possibly escape from a walled Roman camp which is guarded by a Saturninus." Yet he finished his early meal hurriedly and anxiously, and went out to look for her, alone. He wished to spare his future wife, which Bissula certainly was, the mortification of being dragged by freedmen or slaves from some hiding-place into

which her silly, childish obstinacy might have led her. First he hastened to the pine-tree: in vain. She was not concealed there; now, in broad daylight, one could see through the branches distinctly. He went to her tent and entered: it was empty. But as he was leaving it again he saw the broad foot-prints of the bear, and followed the trail: it led southward, to the lake gate, the Porta Decumana. He had nearly reached it, when he met Saturninus.

"Turn back, I beg of you," said the latter kindly.

"Isn't she there?"

"Yes! I discovered her by accident, looking down from the wall. She has hidden herself behind beams and rubbish near the Porta Decumana, like a sick birdling which creeps into some corner to die alone with its head under its wing. Give her time! Perhaps she will submit to it."

Ausonius yielded reluctantly as the Tribune, with gentle force, took his arm, turned him in the opposite direction, and led him back. He was thoroughly angry, and besides, felt ashamed in Saturninus's presence.

"Soon, I hope," he said angrily.

"Yes," replied the Tribune slowly. "Unless —unless some one else has won her heart."

"That she positively denied. She was enraged at the mere question; and falsehood is the perverse little thing's smallest fault. She is still scarcely more than a child. You see how she behaves. Only a child, an untutored child, could be led into such conduct."

But the Roman General shrugged his shoulders. "Let us wait. I would far rather see her yours than a Barbarian's. But think of the offer made by that Adalus! That can only—"

"Certainly. But it doesn't prove that she loves him."

He opposed with angry obstinacy a conjecture which might forever frustrate his wishes, and rejected the suggestion of his friend the more vehemently, the more persistently this fear, though repressed, constantly returned to his mind.

"By the way," he asked the Tribune, to change the conversation, "what do you mean to do with the prisoners? Let them both escape?"

"Impossible! My duty—"

"But my nephew must not die."

"It would be the best thing that could happen," growled the Illyrian, "for himself and his opposite men (for this selfish fellow has no fellow mortals). But I feared that it would be the result of your indulgence. Well, comfort yourself. As I promised life to the slave, the mere tool, the Cæsar can send the instigator to the mines too. But you are paying no heed to my words. Where are your thoughts?"

Ausonius had suddenly stopped. Thrusting the staff he carried violently into the earth he exclaimed: "Listen! Suppose I should go to her now — at once? Explain everything, persuade her? Last evening, in her excitement, she probably did not hear or understand. Just think of it — Consul!"

But his companion smiled and drew his reluctant friend forward: "Let her alone, Ausonius. You will only frighten her more. Perhaps a German fisher-lad is dearer to her heart than a Roman Consul."

"Inconceivable!"

"Yes, yes! Very intelligible. I will confess to you that she vehemently entreated me —"

"What, what! — when?"

"Just now, when I climbed down the wall to her and tried to speak for you. She besought me to protect her—from your wooing."

"Ungrateful girl!" exclaimed Ausonius wrathfully. This appeal to the Tribune against him wounded him most bitterly; he had the feeling: Youth naturally combines against age.

"Beware," replied the Tribune earnestly, "lest you should yourself be very ungrateful." But this did not suit the Roman's deeply offended vanity.

"Since you have now suddenly become—what shall I call it?—her guardian or defender against me—"

"I did not seek the position."

"Nor did you decline it. Then tell your ward my firm, resolute will: She must go with me to-morrow in one of Nannienus's galleys to the Emperor at Vindonissa, then to Burdigala. I will follow your advice: I will not go into the forests with you; grief, anger, too much excitement of many kinds, are making me ill—I feel it. First of all, I must obtain the dispensation from the Emperor to permit me, a Senator, to marry my freedwoman. That is now the thing nearest to my heart. And please see that it is

clear to her, perfectly clear, that she has obtained no legal right whatever from my words spoken yesterday about liberation. You remarked at the time, very justly, that my words did not make her free: the form required by law was lacking. The words were merely a promise. If I choose, she is still my slave, but no longer yours, tell her that. In Burdigala, after she has tasted Roman life, let her choose which she would prefer: to become the Consul's wife, or be his slave and a she-bear's playmate. I cannot force her to wed me, but tell her that I will never permit her to return to her Barbarian land."

Saturninus would have tried to soothe the excited man, but a loud signal from the tubas summoned both leaders to the wall.

The Roman trumpets were joyously greeting the galleys under the command of Nannienus which, with all their canvas spread to catch the southeast wind, came swiftly nearer and nearer. It was a proud and imposing spectacle.

After the gallant Comes of Britannia, himself a Breton skilled in sailing, had discovered the culpable neglect of the ships and the fraud of the guilty magistrates in Arbor, he had toiled

night and day, ceaselessly and untiringly, that he might take to his friend and comrade, Saturninus, the ships and reënforcements on which his whole plan for the encircling and destruction or unconditional surrender of the Alemanni was based. So, in the course of these few days and nights, he had actually succeeded in putting the dilapidated ships into seaworthy condition; and, besides old trading vessels and fisher boats of the largest size, he had a number of new galleys built which, though by no means to be compared with the proud fleet of the Venetian or Brigantinian lake which, a century and a half before, had ruled these shores and waters, could yet render sufficient service in seeking out the hiding-places of the Barbarians along all three sides of the land, and intercepting any flight they might attempt across the lake from the Tribune.

Nannienus's twenty high-decked ships of war, when not lying at anchor but fighting at full speed, would sink, by the mere weight of their shock, when driven by oars and sails, whole swarms of the little Barbarian boats, if they had the temerity to attack them. And to each of these large ships he had assigned two

or three smaller flat-decked, shallow boats, to land provisions and troops and facilitate intercourse between the biremes (which required considerable depth of water when they lay at anchor) and the shore, often bordered for a considerable distance by marshes.

Probably more than sixty sail now appeared, in the full radiance of the most brilliant September sunshine, opposite to the Idisenhang, some at anchor, some in an unbroken chain forming a sort of bridge of boats from the place of anchorage to the shore.

The various forms of the sails (for in the pressure of haste all sorts of Barbarian ones had been added to the triangular Latin form of the Romans — ancient Celtic used on the lake from primeval days, and Alemannic) and their motley colors, principally dazzlingly white, but many deep yellow, gleaming in the sunlight, swelled by the fresh breeze; the surging, swarming life of the soldiers thronging from the ships to the shore, and from the shore to the ships; the greetings of old comrades; the joyful recognition of what had been accomplished in Arbor; the threatening outcries against the Barbarians,

who must now be thoroughly extirpated — the whole presented a scene full of splendor, life, movement, and warlike uproar.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE largest galley, an old war ship which still bore the figure of Amphitrite on its prow, displayed a purple streamer, and the smallest foresail was of the same color; for she carried the Commander of the squadron.

"At last!" the able officer exclaimed as, the first man in the whole armada, he leaped from his galley into the boat which lay rocking at its bowsprit. He ran across the whole line of small vessels to the shore, and sprang with one impatient leap from the last boat across the marshy ground to the solid land to meet the Illyrian, who received him with outstretched arms.

"At last, my friend, I bring ships and men. It has been a long delay."

"I know it was no fault of yours."

"The Cæsar has already sent the guilty men to the mines. Where is the Prefect?"

"Up above, in the camp. He is not well."

"I have letters for him from the Emperor."

"Has no news come from the Emperor Valens yet?" asked Saturninus anxiously.

"Yes, very late news."

"How do matters stand between him and the Goths?"

"Well for him and badly for the Barbarians. They are suffering terribly from hunger. His last letter declines, and right arrogantly, any assistance from Gratianus and our army."

"He doesn't wish to share the fame of the victory with his nephew," said the Tribune, mounting his horse and inviting his friend to ride up the mountain on the beautiful charger brought for his use. Nannienus swung himself into the saddle, and continued:

"A decisive battle is impending, Valens writes. He is marching upon Adrianople, where the Goths are encamped. Why, the horse is sinking here! Are there marshes so far up?"

"Yes, it is the ancient bottom of the lake. So, the die has probably already fallen yonder on the Ister! Well, our little campaign will probably soon be over too. How many helmets do you bring?"

"Thirteen hundred."

"More than enough. Early to-morrow morn-

ing we will divide our forces. Five hundred men will remain in the camp: You will march with the rest toward the northeast, I to the northwest, until we at last find and scatter these incomprehensible foes. Did you see nothing suspicious on your voyage across the lake?"

"Nothing at all. Not a sail, far or near."

"Now that we have ships, we can also search the two tracts of marshland overgrown with rushes, which stretch for leagues on the right and left. We once thought we saw a column of smoke rising in the western marsh."

"That shall be done to-morrow, before we march. A naval battle on Lake Venetia! It has scarcely happened since the days of Tiberius."

"But I am glad to know that you are here on land with your men: Welcome once more to the Barbarian country and to my camp."

With these words the two commanders, followed by a glittering train of Nannienus's officers and the Tribune's mailed riders, passed through the Porta Decumana, which now stood wide open; for the Tribune's men were pouring out, down the mountain side and through the damp meadows and bogs of the half league

of country to the shore, to greet their comrades on the fleet.

Bissula had crouched and made herself as small as possible, that she might slip out unseen like a little mouse from her hiding-place east of the lake gate. But the Illyrian guards were rigidly trained: two gigantic Thracians — one on each side of the threshold — held their spears crossed before the opening, and scanned sharply every one who went in or out. The young girl had crept successfully between the outstretched legs of one, when she struck her head against the shaft of the other's spear. The man's attention was attracted; he recognized her and pushed her gently but irresistibly back.

"No, no!" he said, laughing. "You mustn't go out, you little red serpent! I should get a double drubbing — from the Tribune on the right and the Prefect on the left. Stay inside."

Bissula, her eyes brimming with tears of impotent rage, was obliged to go back: and there, outside the gate, liberty was beckoning; there laughed (she saw it again, for the first time through the open gate) in its azure splendor her beloved lake; there on the right rustled the trees which surrounded Adalo's hall, and

there flew a gull, screaming loudly with delight in life and joy in its free movement, across the rushes of the marshy shore. Alas! and she must go back into the camp, to an uncertain fate. To-morrow she was to leave the country, to go — whither?

"Oh, Adalo, help soon!"

Since the night before she had constantly whispered his name, again and again, as though it were a protecting spell.

On reaching her tent, she untied the bear, which was becoming wildly excited by the noise of the soldiers, and dragged it by the collar inside of the inclosure, where she remained all day. She was not disturbed. Prosper brought wine and food, and told her that his master's whole time was claimed by Nannienus and the other guests; but early the next morning she must be ready to take ship for Constantia, then to go to the Emperor at Vindonissa, and lastly, to his beautiful home. Bissula made no answer.

Leaving the viands untouched, she crouched like some captured wild beast in the corner of her tent farthest from the entrance, with her eyes fixed intently upon it, listening with anxiety

and dread to every sound which drew nearer to her tent from the streets of the camp. Faithful Bruna lay across the threshold; she was the girl's only comfort.

CHAPTER XLVII.

SO the hours of the day had passed. The sun had sunk majestically into the lake; darkness had gathered quickly; there was no moon. The Comes of Britannia had left Ausonius's table early, the hospitable host had vainly tried to induce him to empty one more goblet.

"As many as you please, after the victory, Ausonius. But a sailor must keep sober. Besides, his place is on the water, not on forest-clad heights. I feel here, away from my ships, like a whale left stranded by the tide and lying gasping on the shore. Truly, the only right kind of water is salt water—"

"Because we can't drink it," remarked Ausonius, filling his goblet again.

"But, when one can't have the sea, this long stretch of lake isn't bad. Remember me to your nephew, Herculanus; perhaps by to-morrow he will have recovered from his illness enough for me to seek him in his tent. And at the earliest dawn of morning, Saturninus, I will

search the two reedy lakes for you. If there are no Alemanni, there will be plenty of rare water-fowl to hunt."

He went out with his officers and rode with them, guided by torch-bearers, down the mountain back to the ship-camp: for one-half of the newcomers slept on shore in the tents they had brought with them; the other half on the vessels.

As soon as Nannienus went on board he asked the watch at the helm, a trustworthy Breton countryman, whether he had anything to report.

"Nothing from here, my lord. Only behind Arbor a fire seems to be burning on the Hill of Mercury; or they are celebrating one of their Easter festivals. Look yonder!"

"Yes, that is in one of the farms of the Alemannic settlers. Hark! What was that?"

"Wild swans, my lord. They must have hundreds of nests in the reedy forests. They call and answer one another very often."

"Then surely no men can be hidden there; the noble birds are very shy and wary. Who is coming to relieve you?"

"I, Albinus, the veteran from Arbor."

"Good: you will watch the first and second hours after midnight. Wake me before the gray of dawn."

. . . . .

The sentries in the camp above on the Idisenhang, and below in the tents brought from the ships, had shouted the hour of midnight without the occurrence of anything to disturb the sleepers, who were lying in the deepest repose, except that for a long time the noble dogs which the Tribune, a keen sportsman, had brought from Vindonissa and kept in an empty tent near the northern gate, had barked violently. They were costly animals of the purest British breed, which, trained in the arena at Rome to fight the aurochs, were now to test their skill and courage in the primeval forests. They could not be quieted, whether the guards patted or flogged them, and their loud, angry baying was heard in the ditch before the north gate, where the whole Batavian cohort was on duty. The bright flames and thick columns of smoke from their watch-fire rose from the ditch, now dry once more.

Beyond it, on the north, about a hundred paces from the wall, Rignomer, with Brinno

and two more of his countrymen, had been stationed as an outpost.

"Do you hear the dogs?" asked Rignomer.

"I'm not deaf," growled Brinno.

"When they keep on incessantly, it means something!" the other continued mysteriously.

"Of course it does. They are hungry. Or they have the little one's she-bear at bay."

"She-bear? Nonsense! She's sleeping where others would like to sleep. No, no! Dogs — don't you know that? — can see spirits and hear gods. There is something abroad. Between midnight and dawn the night huntsman rides over the tree-tops. I thought just now that I heard a horse neigh above me, beyond that distant hill — in the air."

"Oh, pshaw! I never saw a horse fly yet!"

"But *He* flies on his eight-hoofed gray steed through the clouds and over the wind-swept forests, when he drives the woman of the woods before him. Hark, what was that? At the right!"

"The hoot of an owl! Very near us!"

"And there — one at the left."

"Hark," cried a third soldier, "didn't that

sound like metal on metal — the clanking of arms — close in front of us?"

"No," said the fourth, "but I hear the faint trampling of a horse's hoofs. Hark! There are several. Now it comes again, nearer still! The foe!"

"Yes, it is the foe!" said Rignomer, seizing the signal horn to raise it to his lips — but he had no power to do so. Horror, paralyzing terror, awe which shook every limb, seized upon the brave man. His hair bristled; voice and hand refused their service. Rigid with fear, he stared at the wooded height before and above him, which suddenly seemed alive.

A warrior sprang from behind every tree; every bush; yet it was not these hundreds of Alemanni that terrified the battle-tried Batavian, but another spectacle. Sometimes in a full glare of light, sometimes dimly seen by the flame of two blazing torches, swung in circles by two horsemen riding at his right and left, a powerful figure of superhuman stature on a grayish-white horse came dashing down from the height toward him. White hair and a floating beard waved around a fierce but majestic countenance,

above which a bird-monster, whose like Rignomer had never seen, seemed to flap its white wings threateningly against the mercenary as the vision rushed onward in silence, a huge spear thrust before him, a long dark cloak flowing back from his shoulders like a cloud; then, when close at hand, the horseman shouted: "Odin! Odin has you all!"

The German flung down spear and shield and, with the cry: "Odin is upon us! Odin is leading them! All is lost," ran back to the ditch at full speed. Two of his comrades followed his example, and all three leaped into the ditch shouting: "All is lost! Odin is upon us! Fly!"

Rignomer was considered the bravest of his race, so even the Batavians, who were too far off to understand his words, were infected by his example; for they saw their leader unarmed, running with every sign of the utmost terror from the ditch toward the northern gate to tear it open and vanish in the camp.

"Fly! Fly! All is lost!"

Most of the men had understood this and, with the same shouts, they now climbed up the wall or poured through the open gate.

Brinno alone had not fled from the post: at Rignomer's cry, also greatly alarmed, he had leaped behind the nearest tree, but here, looking sharply at the terrible horseman, he recovered his composure: "Nonsense!" he called after his flying comrades. "His horse has only four feet, not eight. That is not *he!*" He stepped forward bravely with levelled spear, but the next instant was thrown down by the Duke's charger and, directly after, about thirty mounted men leaped into the ditch, which was now no longer defended, and dashed to the right and left in pursuit of the fugitives who were running along the bottom. The space around the gate was almost empty, swept clean in an instant.

Hariowald himself had ridden straight toward the gate, but just before he reached it, it was flung back from within, shutting out several fugitives who were trying to enter. The Duke sprang from his horse; the intelligent animal instantly stood motionless. He beckoned to his mounted men and to a small band who, meanwhile, had reached the ditch on foot, to follow him to the left of the gate, where rose a huge stone. A large number of other foot-

soldiers now also reached the gate and, mounting ladders they had brought with them (which, strangely enough, were exactly the length required to reach from the bottom of the ditch to the wall), or even climbing on one another's backs, endeavored to scale the wall or to break down the gate with axes.

But here they now encountered vigorous resistance. Arrows, spears, beams, stones flew down upon them: a battle was impending; the attempt to enter the gate with the fugitives had failed. Saturninus had closed it and shot the huge iron bolt with his own strong hand. Awakened by the furious baying of his dogs, he had made the round of the camp to test the watchfulness of the sentries, and was now directing the defence from the walls. His own hand flung down the first ladder raised.

But the battle was already raging at the same time on the other three sides of the camp.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BISSULA, too, on whose burning eyes sleep had not descended, had soon perceived what was happening. She heard with joyous terror the battle cry of the Alemanni, the war horns of her people.

"There they are! They are coming!" she exclaimed exultingly. "Now to meet them!" With the words she ran out of her tent, leading her faithful companion by the collar. She was determined to seize the first opportunity, no matter how dangerous it might be, to escape from the precincts of the camp.

But this was far more difficult than Bissula had expected. She experienced the utmost trouble even in gaining the vicinity of the lake gate to which she was summoned. The regular squares of the Roman camp, intersected at right angles by the streets of tents, rendered the task still more arduous; for at all the streets and squares stood, in dense masses, the reserve troops not engaged in fighting on the walls. No

matter whether their faces or their backs were turned toward her, those ranks could not be penetrated.

Her friend Bruna impeded instead of aiding her. The animal was so wildly excited by the noise of thousands of men shouting, weapons clashing, horses dashing by, and flames blazing on all sides, that the young girl had great difficulty in restraining the daughter of the Alemannic forests from mingling in the battle and furiously attacking the legionaries. So for a long time she could make little progress toward the gate she desired to reach.

But now a gap was suddenly made in the ranks of the soldiers standing before her. A troop of mailed riders came dashing down the street of the camp from the north toward the gate, and the Illyrians before her opened their ranks to let the cavalry pass. Bissula fearlessly seized the tail of one of the horses and, without loosing her hold of Bruna, let herself be dragged along. In this way she successfully reached the Via Principalis, but here, feeling her arm seized, she released the horse, which now kicked violently. The girl looked around angrily. It was old Prosper.

"Halt," he commanded, "you must stay with me, Bissula. That is the order of the patronus; he sent me to you, supposing that you would be in the midst of the uproar. I am to keep strict watch of you, till the attack is repulsed."

"Let me go," she cried angrily, trying to release herself.

"No, you shall not. I must answer for you. Follow me."

They now began to struggle violently; but the man was stronger than the girl. She could not escape his hold. Then Bruna, growling furiously, rose on her hind legs and struck with her huge paws at her mistress's foe. With a cry of terror the freedman, releasing the girl, sprang back, and the next instant Bissula, by creeping between the horses' legs, slipped through the ranks of the mailed riders, who, facing south, were now the only obstacle between her and the lake gate.

She fairly flew down the long, narrow central street, the Via Media, in whose tents the luggage was sheltered. There she saw Herculanus and, somewhat farther down, Davus, each in a heavy oak-block, sunk into the earth,

with both feet thrust through holes and fettered to the blocks with heavy cross chains. Bissula ran farther in terror. Now, for the first time, she looked around for Bruna. The bear had not followed her; her growling came from beyond the ranks of the horsemen, and at the same time Bissula saw a pack of huge dogs, barking furiously, leaping on the angry beast. One of the animals was hurled aside by the terrible paw, yelping with agony. But the girl could wait no longer, far less turn back. She hurried on; already she saw before her the goal of her longing, the Decumanian Gate.

Already the blows of axes were thundering ceaselessly outside upon the groaning oak planks and iron bars. Those were her own people, her deliverers, her liberators! But the solid gate held out firmly, and missiles rained from the top of the wall upon the unprotected assailants. She pressed forward as near the gate as she could. Only a single rank of soldiers separated her from it. Then Bissula heard outside a ringing voice which sent a thrill of rapture through every vein. She knew those tones.

"Set fire to the gate! Bring all the torches!"

Forgetting all caution, she sprang through the rank of soldiers, pushing two of them aside, put her face to the gate and called with her utmost strength, "Adalo! Help! Adalo!"

"Bissula!" rose a voice without, and a terrible blow — the first which had penetrated — cleft a yawning gash in the right wing of the double gate, so that the splinters flew inside.

At the same time Bissula heard two voices call her name from the wall above. Looking up she saw Zercho and Sippilo who, in advance of all the others, had scaled the wall at the right of the gate.

"Here, little one!" shouted the Sarmatian, letting a rope slide down the inside, while he wound the other end around the ladder rising above the wall.

"Where are you, Bissula?" called Sippilo, leaning far over and holding a torch down. "Alas! I can't see her anywhere!"

The girl, standing at the left of the gate, could not make her way through the soldiers to the right; she was obliged to see a strong Thracian on the top of the wall seize a heavy pole, which he held crosswise with both hands,

and springing forward hurl both the over-bold assailants (they were still standing alone) backward at a single thrust.

"Oho, Sippilo," shouted Adalo outside, "what was that?"

"A somersault!" replied the boy laughing, and jumping up again. "But you, Zercho! Alas! you cannot stand?"

"Unfortunately! My foot—I think it is broken!"

"Take him, men, two of you, and carry him out of the fight," Adalo ordered.

"Where?"

"To my own hall; it is still standing."

Bissula uttered a cry when she saw her two friends fall backward; but the next instant her senses failed. A soldier whom she had repeatedly tried to thrust aside turned angrily: he meant to strike his troublesome comrade, as he supposed the person to be. Then he recognized the young girl, and his wrath instantly vanished.

"Go back, little one!" he exclaimed. "You'll get killed here!"

And, with kindly intent, he flung her toward the left; but the clumsy fellow exerted too much

strength, or the weight of the dainty figure was too light; she struck her head so violently against one of the beams of her old hiding-place that she lay stunned and senseless where she had fallen.

"Bissula!" Adalo called again through the gaping cleft in the door. But he received no answer.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE Adeling and his followers would probably soon have forced their way through this gate, one of whose wings had already caught fire and was beginning to glow and smoke more and more, while the other was splitting wider and wider under the heavy blows of the axe, had not the battle on the opposite side of the camp taken a turn which was also to prove decisive for the conflict around the Porta Decumana. Scarcely had Bissula fallen unconscious, when down every street in the camp that led from the north toward this southern gate, riders, riderless horses, foot-soldiers, and slaves came rushing in a wild flight with frantic cries.

"Fly," cried a warrior in scale armor, dashing past Herculanus and Davus. "The Barbarians are upon us!"

"The camp is taken!" shouted a Celt, hurrying out of a side street.

"They have climbed over the wall at the Prætorian Gate."

"No, the earth opened. Orcus spewed the Barbarians into the middle of the camp!"

"Fly!" shrieked a camp-follower's wife, "I saw Saturninus run down by his own men! All is lost!" And in truth it seemed so.

Ausonius had been waked by Prosper, and while he was arming, Decius, a gallant officer, appeared and in the Tribune's name invited him to undertake the defence of the Porta Principalis Dextra with a cohort of the Twenty-second Legion, which had already been ordered there.

"I will accompany you," said he.

"What is the matter? The Barbarians? Are they attacking?"

"Don't you hear them?"

"Yes, of course I do! On which side?"

"On all sides!"

"I will hasten." With these words Ausonius, putting on his helmet, left the tent.

"What is the Tribune's decision?" he asked as they turned to the right into the nearest street. "To make a sally?"

"No! To remain in the camp. It will be defended to the last. There is too great a superiority in the force outside." With these

words the two officers reached the legionaries and, followed by them, soon gained the eastern gate of the camp. From here Ausonius sent Prosper to protect Bissula, but also to watch that she did not escape.

Meanwhile Saturninus had convinced himself that, for the moment, no pressing danger threatened the northern or Prætorian Gate, and hurrying down the steps inside the wall, he exchanged his part of warrior for that of Commander. Gathering his officers about him in the open space at the foot of the wall, about a hundred paces north of the pine-tree of the earth-goddess, he curtly issued swift commands. "Let all the horsemen dismount and fight on the walls, except the first squadron of mailed riders; but these are not to dismount — do you hear? — on pain of death, under any pretext. All the riderless horses must be led to the Porta Decumana; for if a sally should be made, or" — he added in a lower tone so that only his officers could hear — "if it should be necessary to leave the camp, we shall go to the south to aid Nannienus. If he be not attacked himself, he will instantly assail the Barbarians in the rear at that gate."

"Help at the Porta Principalis Sinistra!" entreated a horseman dashing from the west.

Saturninus turned to speak to the messenger and, in doing so, turned his back to the pine-tree; but he had scarcely addressed a few words to the man, when a centurion standing behind the General uttered a cry of terror and seized him by the arm: "Look around you, Tribune! There! By the pine-tree! The earth is trembling; the abyss is opening; the altar stones have sprung apart!"

Just at that moment the Barbarians' war-cry: "Odin! Odin! Alemanni!" rang out in the midst of the camp, and Saturninus's face blanched as he saw a gigantic figure in a white helmet, near the pine-tree, strike down with his long spear a Celtic archer, who, shrieking, tried to escape. Three, six, eight, twelve Barbarians had risen from the earth. With a cry of savage fury the brave Roman rushed toward the giant. But he could not reach him, his own soldiers threw him down.

It was a body of the Celts, hot-blooded, brave in assault, but easily disheartened after an unfavorable turn. They saw the foe in the midst of the camp; only a few had noticed

whence they came or how small at first was their number. Seized with panic, many throwing away their weapons, they fled in frantic terror.

"Treason! Treason! The enemy is in the camp!" With these shouts a whole troop of fugitives had flung themselves between the Duke and the Roman General. The latter instantly sprang to his feet again.

"Halt, you cowards," shouted the fearless Tribune, again trying to check with flashing sword, the mad rush of the fugitives. "Look around you. There is only a handful of the enemy. And where will you fly? Outside of the camp? Among the greatly superior number of the foe? Only these walls can save you!"

"To the ships! To Nannienus! Across the lake! To Arbor!"

"Then die, you coward!" he cried fiercely, striking down the nearest shouter, a standard bearer of the Celts; and tearing from the falling man the dragon standard, with its fluttering purple streamers, he swung it aloft, crying, "Roma! Roma!" and pressed forward.

For a moment he really succeeded in check-

ing the fugitives. And now the bold little band of intruders was in the utmost peril; then Saturninus's attention was suddenly diverted to the top of the wall.

Many, many of its defenders had turned at the noise behind them, seen German helmets in the midst of the camp, heard the cries of terror from the Celts, and noticed their General himself rush into the midst of the fugitives. They believed that the camp had been taken from the opposite direction, and feared every moment that they would be attacked from the rear. So they leaped from the top of the wall in large numbers or came rushing down the stairs. The besiegers outside, hitherto held in check by a heavy shower of missles, suddenly saw whole ranks of the defenders vanish, whole stretches of the wall left empty and, with wild shouts, they climbed boldly and confidently up the ladders. When the Tribune looked up, the assailants were already springing from the wall in dense masses, hewing down the few Romans who had gathered around him, while the fierce giant's terrible spear struck down one after another.

Saturninus cast one more glance at the top

of the wall: countless bands of Barbarians were appearing on it. Then, in a voice whose tones rang above the din of battle, he shouted the order: "Leave the camp! Follow this standard! To the Porta Decumana! Close ranks! If you open them, you will be lost!"

These words had their effect. Often had these soldiers proved that this solid closing of their ranks was the best, nay, the only means of repelling the assault of the Germans. The hope of reaching their comrades on the ships revived their courage; retreating toward the south, fighting as they marched, they followed their trusted leader.

The pursuers from the north and east pressed hotly upon them; but the Romans moving southward received considerable reënforcements from the east and the west, where the cross streets from both sides ran into the one extending from north to south — the Via Media. Meanwhile the troops defending the eastern and western gates had heard the war-cry of the Alemanni within the camp and the shouts of their own fugitives, and giving up the hopeless resistance, they thronged, according to a stand-

ing rule in the camp, into the long central street which led to the Porta Decumana, the gate assigned for the Roman line of retreat.

True, the troops from the western gate, where the assailants had already made considerable progress, poured down in great confusion; but Decius and Ausonius led the legionaries of the Twenty-second Cohort from the eastern gate in good order. Saturninus saw the two leaders from the distance, but separated by the whole flood of marching men, they could not meet. So the columns, overtaken and pressed by the Barbarians only in the rear, gradually reached in better order the spot where the Via Principalis, near the Decumanian Gate, intersected the long central street leading to it. Here all the baggage, with many hundred carts and wagons, was piled together. Such a barricade, a valuable defence to German bands on the migrations, was the most dangerous obstacle and interruption to the Roman order of marching and fighting; for no matter whether the attempt to pass was made by going around or climbing over it, in either case the firmly closed ranks were broken into little groups,

nay sometimes even separated into individual warriors, who were forced to press forward or climb over the wagons one behind another.

But the old Duke had not studied the plan of the camp in vain: he had noted accurately where the baggage, the carts and wagons were placed, and eagerly distributed all the bands of his men who poured toward him. They came from the three gates north, west, and east, which they had long since forced open, and they passed through the streets of the camp in such a manner, as they pressed forward in pursuit, that they pushed from all sides down the long and the cross streets upon the fugitives, just at this exact point.

CHAPTER L.

IN the midst of the intoxication of victory another joy filled the old leader's heart: delight in the progress which, within a single generation, the training in obedience had made in the subjection of his Alemanni to the military authority of their Duke.

The traditions of their forefathers and his own youthful experience contained many an instance in which Germans had lost a victory already won, because the conquerors, against their leader's commands, began, in unbridled lust for booty, to plunder the captured camp. They would scatter themselves through tents and baggage wagons, each vying with his comrades, so that the Romans, little disturbed by pursuit, found the opportunity to assemble again and, with closed ranks, could wrest from the dispersed pillagers both camp and victory. So the old Commander could say to himself with proud delight: "They have learned something, through me — under me — ay, for love of me!"

Before the commencement of the assault he had proposed, for he could not command: "The camp and all its contents shall belong to the whole army, after the victory is won. When the morning sun shines down upon it, a division shall be made according to districts, families, and individuals. Whoever takes, in advance, even a vessel or a weapon shall be regarded as a thief who has robbed his people, and shall be hanged."

The bands had assented, and they loyally kept their word: not a man turned from the battle, or left the ranks to plunder, or even stooped to pick up the costly gold and silver articles which the slaves, flying from Ausonius's tent, had tried to hide, or perhaps steal. The slaves had soon thrown down these articles that they might not be hampered in their flight.

Obedient to Hariowald's orders, the Alemanni drove the fugitives from all directions toward the central street of the camp; so the confused torrent which, hitherto, had poured through many separate channels southward, was dammed by this obstacle and checked.

The first men, still running at full speed

down the narrow side paths at the right and left, squeezed past the wide rows of carts, or, if not too much crowded by their neighbors, climbed over them; but both plans soon became possible only by the most violent struggles for precedence on the part of the fugitives, as the hundreds driven here and there by the Duke's followers rushed upon the closed ranks of the two leaders' orderly columns. These fugitives pressed forward with the strength of despair, especially after they perceived, with horror, that throwing down their weapons and surrendering did not save them from death.

"Woe, they are killing every one! Make way! Let us pass! They are murdering the prisoners!"

"No!" shouted the Duke to the nearest shrieker, "they are not murdering the prisoners, for they have none!" and struck him down.

Then the ranks which had remained closed began to waver. Saturninus succeeded in crowding past the wagons on the right and hastened onward toward the gate. The scene was brightly lighted by many blazing tents, into which the victors had flung faggots smeared with pitch and resin. At the corner of one of the cross

streets Saturninus saw two of his beautiful large dogs, with torn bodies, lying one above the other, while he heard the others barking furiously, and at intervals the sound of fierce growling. The next instant he was pushed far forward by the men crowding behind him. He looked around for Ausonius, who had been mounted, and saw him on foot trying to climb over the barricade of wagons. He was making slow progress, and already, close upon this band of fugitives, the war-cry of the pursuers sounded nearer and nearer.

The Tribune ordered several pioneers whom he met to break a passage with their axes through the carts for Ausonius and the left column. The men did not obey willingly; they were reluctant to turn back, with the Decumanian Gate in sight, to meet the furious attack of the foe; but Roman military discipline and the habit of obedience to their honored General again conquered, so they went to meet Ausonius, while the Tribune hastened onward.

The rising flames, the echoing blows of the axes, accompanied by the ominous crash of splintering wood, urged the Tribune to still greater speed; this gate must not be opened

from the outside if his last attempt to escape was not to fail. But scarcely had he reached the open space before it, when fresh cries of despair rose from the column at the left commanded by Ausonius. Before the pioneers had broken a passage to the Prefect, his men had been reached by the arrows and spears of the pursuers, and he himself, falling between two wagons, suddenly vanished from their eyes. Loud lamentations from his followers burst forth.

Then the pioneers turned and fled in the opposite direction; the Barbarians were threatening on the left, so they ran down one of the cross streets at the right which intersected the central one.

"Fly," called the foremost one, running directly past Herculanus, who was making desperate but fruitless efforts to tear with his unchained hands the solid oak-block from the earth or to release his feet from the small holes and iron clamps. "Fly! Ausonius has fallen!"

"Ausonius is dead!" shouted the second; throwing away his heavy axe, which impeded his flight. It fell near the prisoner, who, without heeding the violent pain which the move-

ment caused to his strained feet and bruised ankles, stretched both arms toward it. Triumph! He could reach it. At least he could touch the handle with the tips of his fingers, draw it slowly nearer, then at last seize and drag it to his side.

One of Ausonius's slaves, who had been wounded by an arrow, limped along more slowly. "Oh, my kind master, Ausonius! He has fallen. He is dead."

"Dead?" cried Herculanus, "are you sure he is dead?"

But the fugitive had not heard, or did not wish to hear him — he had already moved on to Davus.

"Help me!" wailed the latter. "Don't leave me here to burn — or to fall into the hands of the Barbarians!"

"Miserable murderer!" was the only answer. The fugitive had already disappeared around the corner.

Meanwhile Herculanus, seizing the sharp axe with both hands and bending downward, dealt blows with all his strength upon the oak-block which held his feet, just between the two

holes pierced from the top to the bottom. At last the solid wood parted, breaking open the holes; two more blows severed the shackles which bound his feet to the two halves. The prisoner was free. Yet it was only with difficulty and severe pain that he could use his legs, stiffened by sitting still so many hours and swollen by the pressure on the bones. But the desire to live, the hope of escape, conquered the pain: he walked, at first very slowly, toward Davus, who had watched him enviously.

"Help me out too. You, you alone, have brought me to this."

"Yes, traitor, I'll help you out," cried the other, with an angry laugh. Cleaving the slave's skull with the axe, he ran on more quickly, his limbs becoming more supple at every step, toward the western end of the cross street; for the noise from the east grew louder and louder.

The conflagration did not extend to this part of the camp. He glided into a tent and hid himself, for he still had cause to fear his own countrymen almost as much as the Barbarians. Here he found a short dagger, like those worn

by the Thracians, which he thrust into his belt; he then put down the long-handled heavy axe, which had burdened him while running.

Ausonius dead! Perhaps all who knew of that incident were dead too! He could not shake off the thought while peering cautiously between two folds of the tent, watching for a way of escape between Romans and Barbarians.

CHAPTER LI.

HERCULANUS was mistaken: Ausonius was not slain. In the attempt to leap from one cart to another he had fallen between them and slightly hurt his foot. But Decius and some legionaries of the Twenty-second Cohort had helped him up again and taken him at once to the Decumanian Gate. Here, meanwhile, the Tribune had quickly made his arrangements, gathering the fugitives arriving singly around a body of his Illyrians, to whom he also entrusted the standard.

"Where is the ala of mailed riders whom I ordered here, forbidding them to dismount? We need them now at the head of the sortie."

"Alas, Tribune, in the turmoil, in the pressure on the gate and the walls, we all dismounted and fought on foot. Our horses are gone; they dashed down the side streets."

"This is Herculanus's discipline of his men! So — we have no horsemen. Well then, the

spears to the front! The wounded in the centre! Here, Ausonius, behind my troop! There. Draw back the bolts; throw the gate open. We will fight our way through to the ships. Forward! On!"

Then the gate, hitherto so firmly defended, its right wing half shattered, the left half burned, opened from within, and the Romans, summoning their last strength, led by their able General in person, and stimulated to a final supreme effort by his example and the prospect of safety, burst out of the camp. The shock was terrible, and the effect of the unexpected attack upon the Barbarians was very great. All who had been standing on the narrow strip of ground between the gate and the ditch were hurled into it. Adalo was not among the number; he had gone back for a moment to direct the preparation of a bridge of logs which was to lead directly to the gate; then he intended to have his men run across with beams to batter the already weakened timbers and break it down completely. So he escaped the fall into the ditch, which Sippilo shared, but as in the plunge from the wall, uninjured. The boy climbed nimbly

up the southern side. He had lost the helmet in his first tumble, but held fast to his spear and shield this time too.

For a moment, it is true, it seemed as if the Romans, as soon as they had passed through the gate and obtained a view of the lake, would disperse again in fresh terror; for meanwhile the attack on the ships and the camp below had apparently succeeded.

Hitherto the defenders on the walls had waited longingly for Nannienus, and looked in vain over the Barbarians and their flaring pitch torches toward the lake. But now that they had reached the open country outside the camp, they saw a vast conflagration on the shore. Surrounded by the tumult of the battle raging immediately about them, they had been unable to hear the noise of the conflict which had commenced below half an hour before; but they now perceived all that Saturninus had long since concluded by the absence of his brave friend: the fleet itself was being most hotly assailed.

"The ships are burning! The camp is in flames! Our last refuge is gone!" With these shouts, many sprang from the closed ranks,

fled, and were instantly overtaken by the Germans and struck down before their comrades' eyes.

"You see how fugitives fare!" cried Saturninus. "Keep your ranks closed if you want to save your lives. March in close order to the lake, and we shall save ourselves and our friends."

This was a ray of encouragement, and the whole body followed their brave leader, who was the first man to climb up the southern side of the ditch. As soon as he reached the top his own name, shouted loudly from the ranks of the Barbarians, fell upon his ear.

"Where is Saturninus, the General of the Romans?" called a voice in Latin.

Brightly illumined by the flames of the burning camp, a leader of the Germans, in the richest armor, pressed forward before his men. A boar-helmet covered his head; a gray-bearded attendant held before him a long shield on which he caught two well-aimed Roman spears at once.

"Where is Saturninus? I must find him!" repeated the German, springing forward again and felling the nearest Thracian with his battle axe.

"Here," answered the Tribune. "But this is no time to negotiate."

"No, but to die!" shouted Ebarbold, his battle axe crashing upon the huge curved shield of the Roman. It entered it without injury to the bearer.

The King vainly struggled to draw out the weapon, it remained motionless, and already the Roman's short, murderous broad sword was quivering for the fatal stroke, when the gray-haired shield-bearer sprang between them and threw the shield before his master.

But the Norian iron penetrated the boar hide and the wooden frame of the shield to the old man's left breast. He fell on his back, borne down by the weight of the blow.

Meanwhile Ebarbold had dropped the handle of the battle axe, drawn the long unwieldy sword at his side, and swung it above the proud crest of the Roman General's helmet; but before it fell, the short Roman sword, red with the blood of the shield-bearer, pierced his throat and he sank dying by the old man's side. "You — with me — for me!" he could say no more.

"Did you think I would desert you? The

King of the Ebergau must not enter Odin's hall unattended. You shall not enter the door of Valhalla unattended like some man of low degree. We — have — both — kept our word — and together — with the honor of heroes — we will go to Valhalla."

Ebarvin's head sank on the shoulder of his King. Both were silent in death.

The Illyrian had sprung forward over the bodies of the two Germans — first hewing off with his sword the handle of the battle axe still sticking in his shield — amid the wild, exulting shouts of his countrymen who had witnessed the struggle. But the men of the Ebergau were dismayed by their leader's fall; they hesitated — stopped — yielded.

"Forward, down to the lake!" shouted the Tribune. "You see they are giving way." It was a dangerous moment; for, confused by the retreat of the Ebergau men, the band next behind them was wavering.

CHAPTER LII.

"STAND, men of the Linzgau!" shouted a clear, resonant voice, and a youth with golden-brown locks fluttering around his handsome head forced a passage through the Alemanni and Romans toward the Tribune.

But the Romans had neither the inclination nor the habit of letting their General fight single combats with the Barbarian princes. A gigantic Illyrian stepped from the left of the ranks in front of his leader and aimed his spear at the youth's face. But the weapon did not fly; before he could hurl it a German boy leaped from below against the warrior, and thrust his little spear into the arm-pit, now unprotected by his suit of mail. He fell with a loud cry.

"I thank you, little brother!" exclaimed Adalo and now, pressing close upon Saturninus, he called to him in Latin: "Where is Bissula?"

But the Roman General had no thought to give to a Barbarian girl; the recollection of the captive had darted only once through his brain

with the speed of lightning, when he heard her she-bear growling in the camp. He made no reply, except to wave the sword still dripping with Ebarbold's blood.

The Adeling's spear flew; Saturninus caught it on his shield; but being burdened by the long lance, this was now so difficult to manage that he let it fall, and sprang with a well-aimed sword thrust toward the youth, who had instantly drawn his short battle-axe from his girdle. Each was so furiously resolved to fell the other, that neither thought of his own defence. So both struck, and both fell.

With his utmost strength—and it was great—the German had aimed at his adversary's forehead: the latter involuntarily bowed his head, putting the helmet forward, but the terrible stroke cleft this best work of the Roman armorers at Trier, and pierced through the bronze and the double leather of the lining to the skull. The helmet was found afterwards; and this "Suabian stroke" was long celebrated in the hall of the stag's antlers. But the lord of the hall seemed destined never to return to it, but to follow Ebarbold and Ebarvin; for, at the same time, the Roman's sword had penetrated

the wooden shield of the German and cut deep into his left shoulder.

Sippilo caught his brother's drooping head; several attendants grasped his feet, and thus they bore him swiftly out of the battle.

Decius, springing from Ausonius's side, now took command of the Romans. But he could no longer maintain order in the ranks. At their leader's fall under Adalo's terrible blow the column scattered in a wild flight down the hillside. The foremost ones, who had witnessed the duel, dispersed to the right and left. The rear ranks still held firm, but now they received an attack from behind, from the camp, and all was over. This attack was led by Duke Hariowald. At last — far too late for his battle fury — he, too, had crossed the camp and reached the Porta Decumana.

The greatest obstacle to the pursuit was now what had formerly been the principal cause of the hesitation, confusion, and dispersion of the retreating Roman troops: namely, the luggage, the barricade of wagons. Behind it, that is, between it and the lake gate, numerous Romans, especially the German mercenaries, the Batavians, who were accustomed to such methods

of fighting, had again made a stand; and much time was consumed before the Duke, by means of fire, axe-blows, and bloodshed, forced a passage through it. He had at once sent bodies of his men through the cross streets leading to the right and left; to go round the obstacle and attack the defenders on both flanks. Herculanus had watched, in mortal terror, from his hiding-place in the tent, the Alemanni dashing down these cross streets. Many rows of tents were already blazing; others were blocked with piles of luggage and tent equipage left behind. It was long before the Duke and his men, breaking their way through the citadel of wagons and driving its last defenders before them, reached the Decumanian Gate; but then with his whole body of troops, intoxicated by their victory, he fell upon the rear of the Romans commanded by Decius.

All was lost. Decius succeeded in holding together only one very small band of Illyrians, scarcely twenty men. These, with their wounded General and Ausonius in their midst, burst through the ranks of the Linzgau men, who for some time were occupied with the care of Adalo, and fled directly south toward the lake.

It was evident that the only hope of escape was by the ships, for swift destruction was overtaking all the fugitives, who scattered and fled to the right and left, the east and west. Without leadership or direction, only keeping in general toward the lake, they ran singly, in pairs, and in groups. Most of them, in the darkness of the night, floundered into the marshes, where, ignorant of the fords or the few higher portions, they sank, and were either drowned or cut down by their pursuers.

As soon as Hariowald reached the open ground he heard of the King's fall, to which he listened with a silent nod, and — from Sippilo's lips — of the Adeling's wound.

"Severe?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the shoulder; cut completely through."

"H'm! — Was he carried to his hall?"

"Yes."

"Take the blind old dame Waldrun to him at once from the Holy Mountain. She knows the strongest herbs, and she also knows when and how they must be gathered, without impatience or rough handling."

"She is already waiting at his hall."

"How did that happen?"

"She dreamed last night that this battle would end in victory, but that she nursed my brother, who lay in her lap, sorely wounded. She insisted that the Sarmatian should lead her to our hall before the battle began. 'I will wait there for the wounded man,' she said."

"But you are bleeding, too, my lad; there, in the arm."

"A spear grazed me. It isn't much."

"Enough for the first time! You are surely tottering."

"An arrow — in the calf of my leg — but it didn't go deep."

"You can scarcely stand. Go home at once, do you hear? I command it by the oath of loyalty to the Duke. Waldrun will have a healing herb for you, too. Go!"

Assuming the direct leadership of the bands formerly commanded by Ebarbold and Adalo, the Duke spread his whole force into the widest possible front, to inclose the fugitives, and gave only one order: "Drive them into the lake!" The command was received with shouts of exultation, and faithfully obeyed.

Hariowald had swung himself upon one of the numerous riderless horses dashing through and around the camp; his men eagerly followed his example, and thus the pursuit became a wild chase on horseback and on foot down the descent from the heights to the lake.

The blazing camp behind, and the blazing ships before them, cast a terribly beautiful, flickering light over the savage, warlike scene. But already, though still very dim, another light was stealing where the red glare of the torches and the burning tents did not penetrate. The night was no longer perfectly dark. Far away, in the extreme east, dawn was glimmering; for more than two, almost three hours of the September night had passed in the battle around the camp since the criers had announced the second hour after twelve.

CHAPTER LIII.

MEANWHILE Bissula had recovered consciousness. The loud summons of the tubas, giving the signal for the sally of the Romans, had roused her. Raising herself in her hiding-place behind the beams and planks which, piled one above another to the height of a man, completely concealed her, she peered through the openings between them. Her heart throbbed with joy as she saw the lake gate, hitherto so impenetrably and inexorably closed against her, now standing wide open. Cautiously, crouching like a kitten that tries to escape the hand outstretched to seize it, she glided to the western corner of her hiding-place and looked out at the gate.

Yet, ardently as she longed for liberty, and familiar as was the fearless daughter of the forest by the lake with all the perils and horrors of the primeval woods and the waves, she was but a girl, and had never before witnessed the terrors of murderous battles. But now Bis-

sula saw the bloody scenes, of which, hitherto, she had only heard from her uncle or some bard at a feast celebrating a victory: she saw, and trembled.

By the light of the two wings of the gate, now blazing furiously, the torches of the Romans, and the bundles of faggots hurled among the tents by the Alemanni, she saw close at hand, beyond the ditch, the bloody, murderous conflict. She saw the meeting between the Romans, as they burst from the camp, and the assailing bands of her own people; saw things which sent a thrill of horror through every vein.

Trembling in every limb she sank down, as though paralyzed, on a pile of lumber behind her, and gazed with dilated eyes, through the gate at the terrible spectacle, from which, with all its horrors, she could not avert her gaze, or even lower her eyelids. Suddenly she saw Saturninus, then he vanished, hidden by his Illyrians, then reappeared, far in the van. She recognized the King of the Ebergau, — he had given her a clasp at the last spring festival, — then she saw him fall backward without rising again. The little figure at his side, with fair curls floating around his uncovered head, was Sippilo. So

the plunge from the wall had not injured him.

Then a gigantic Illyrian, swinging a blazing torch,—a terrible weapon,—approached him from the side. The boy did not see the brand uplifted above him; Bissula, forgetting all danger to herself, shrieked loudly. Then the soldier sank. For an instant she saw, by the glare of the torch, Adalo, who had rescued his brother, and she rejoiced at the spectacle, but the torch went out as its bearer fell. The brothers vanished from her sight. Directly afterwards she heard in loud, wailing tones the cry of many voices: "Adalo! alas for Adalo! alas for the Adeling!"

Horror and anxiety for her friend made her heart sink: she could get no further glimpse of him. And, from the camp behind her, a fresh uproar arose, which swiftly drew nearer. It was Hariowald, now with his men driving the last Batavians (Bissula recognized Rignomer) from the fortress of wagons, and the scattered Romans flying down all the streets through the Decumanian Gate. She attempted to join the pursuing Alemanni, but their arrows and spears flew close about her; a stone from a sling fell crashing against a beam above her head and, terrified, she threw herself face downward on

the ground and let the dangerous stream of foe and friend roar past her into the distance.

The camp soon became still, absolutely still. Outside the gate, too, the din of battle swept very swiftly down the hill toward the lake. Bissula rose again and looked through the gate. In the distance she saw, though indistinctly, the surging ranks pour down the slope; she could scarcely distinguish the figures, but her people's shouts of victory rang loudly in her ears. A rush of joy filled her heart and she cried exultingly: "Victory! Liberty! Hurrah!" But the next instant she said to herself reproachfully: "And Ausonius! And brave Saturninus! Alas! and Adalo!"

Her grief, her terrible anxiety for her lover drove her from her hiding-place even more powerfully than the longing for her liberation, and she resolved to venture across the dreaded battlefield, lately so full of uproar, now so horribly silent. The camp was deserted. At least it seemed so, as Bissula, stealing cautiously around the corner of the barricade, looked in every direction. She thought, too, of the faithful bear: "Bruna! Here, Bruna!" she called up the streets of the camp as loudly as she could;

but no Bruna came. Though the burning tents still gave light enough, she saw no upright figure near, either of friend or foe. Only on the ground, here and there, some movement still remained.

A dead Celt lay directly across one of the streets, his helmet on his head and the spear still in his rigid hand. With horror — she had never before witnessed death, being only a few years old when she lost her parents — she cautiously stepped over the broad mailed breast, holding up her garments that they might not brush against the corpse. "Three bounds," she thought, "and I shall reach the gate." She had already raised her foot for a swift run, when a groan behind her reached her ear. Involuntarily, though shaken by fresh fear, she looked around. Terrible things exert a strange compulsion which at the same time attracts and repels. A Roman severely wounded lay a few steps behind her, his head resting on a tent-pole, his right arm propped on the ground, and his left pressed against the gaping wound in his breast. He must have seen the girl, for, instead of moaning, he now called, in Latin, "Water, oh, pray give me some water!"

Bissula shrank in fear; besides, she dreaded to turn from the liberty beckoning outside the gate to go back into the camp. But her woman's heart conquered the terror, and she glanced around her to see if she could find means to quench the sufferer's thirst. Then her eyes fell on one of the huge tuns which, according to Roman camp regulations, always stood filled with water beside each gate. It was so high that she could scarcely look into it, but she pulled herself to the top with both hands and saw that there was plenty of water inside. But where was she to find a cup? All sorts of utensils lay scattered around, but neither goblet nor vessel.

Then a thought flashed through her mind which at first made her shudder. But she bravely conquered the girlish fright, went to the dead Celt, loosed, with trembling fingers, the iron band which fastened the helmet under his chin, drew it carefully, tenderly, as if the dead could feel, from his head, then hastened to the cask, half filled it, and carried it with both hands, the long horse-hair of the crest trailing on the ground. She walked slowly, that she might not spill too much, to the groaning man,

who watched her movements with glassy eyes and opened his mouth eagerly. Kneeling by his side, she held the helmet sideways to his bearded lips. He drained it to the last drop, and with a long sigh of relief, laid his head back on the pole and said, with an effort:

"Are you a Christian?"

The girl shook back her red locks defiantly: "Freya and Frigga protect me."

"No matter," replied the dying man, "Christ, the Saviour, girl, will reward you for this drink!"

Bissula rose slowly, her glance rested upon the nearest street of tents to the left and, with a sharp cry of terror, she dropped the helmet and ran as swiftly as she could, toward the gate. For, down that street, brightly illumined by the blaze of the burning tents, she saw, stealing toward her, crouching like a beast of prey, with a dagger in his hand,— Herculanus.

CHAPTER LIV.

HITHERTO Herculanus had remained concealed from both Romans and Germans in the tent on the cross street where he had sought refuge. Now everything around had become so still that he might have supposed the camp to be deserted, but the cautious fugitive probably would not have left the tent yet if the fire, and still more the smoke, of the consuming leather had not driven him away. Peering timidly between the folds, he glided out, and his first glance fell upon the hated girl to whom he believed he owed his downfall. With a short, half stifled cry of savage delight in vengeance, he sprang toward her, the quivering dagger uplifted, when he saw that he was discovered. But Bissula had a good start; he was obliged to pass the fifty paces of the cross street before reaching the corner tent where she had just been kneeling, and his aching feet would not permit him to follow as fast as his hate desired.

Meanwhile Bissula fled like a hunted deer

down the central street to the gate; there she glanced back. Alas, he must have guessed the direction of her flight, for he also ran toward the gate and saw her pass out into the open country. He followed.

At first hate and revenge urged him recklessly on. But now, after obeying these impulses, he said to himself while running:

"Ausonius is dead; I am his heir. And perhaps the few others who knew of the incident died, too, in this hour, like Davus; only the Barbarian girl lives. Has he, meantime, made her his heiress? Hardly! And even if it were so, the will has probably burned with the other things in the camp; and even if it should be saved, what harm can it do, if the person named as heiress also perishes during this night of universal slaughter? However that may be, she shall not — must not live."

He too had reached the gate. The gray dawn of day was already diffusing sufficient pale light for him speedily to discover the flying figure on the opposite side of the ditch; her white garments and fluttering red locks betrayed her when the wind bore the glare from the burning camp in her direction.

Herculanus leaped into the ditch, but uttered a cry of pain, and fell: his feet were too lame. Climbing and dragging himself up with his hands, with great difficulty and keen suffering he succeeded in reaching the southern side of the trench. The fugitive had gained a longer distance in advance. The Roman perceived this with furious rage and, battling with the pain, forcing his reluctant feet to bear him onward, he redoubled his efforts to overtake her.

Bissula was doubtless greatly terrified when, after passing through the gate into the open country, she again saw flames rising before, as well as behind her, and heard the din of the raging battle. She had learned from Prosper the arrival of the ships and the camp made by the lake, so she understood that the conflict was probably now roaring around the galleys. Yet she unhesitatingly obeyed the impulse which led her away from Herculanus straight down to the lake; there, though she would once more encounter the horrors of war, she would surely find her own people.

So she ran directly down the hill, always watching sharply to see if she could not distinguish one of the Alemanni on her way. But the men

whom she met were not Alemanni; they were Romans, and lay dead or dying on the earth. Once she was startled by a horse that dashed across her path; trembling, she hid herself behind a clump of bushes; but the steed bore no rider. Two, four, six masterless animals followed the first, but neither Romans nor Alemanni, who might have threatened or protected her, were visible far or near: flight and pursuit had long since swept down to the lake. A furious struggle was still raging below.

She was forced to stop a moment, her heart was beating so violently. Looking back from the bushes, she saw a dark figure, now plainly visible in the light of morning, still swiftly chasing her; nay, it seemed as though, behind the first, a second pursuer had rushed from the camp or risen from the ground.

Again she ran forward, confidently hoping to reach her people by the lake before she was overtaken; for the child of the forest was skilled in running and had a considerable start. But, after a few steps, fresh terror seized her: she again heard, this time directly behind her, the hoofbeats of a horse. At first she hoped it was another riderless charger, but it followed

directly upon her track, and she now heard, in the language of the foe, all sorts of cries urging the animal on. A frightful thought darted through her brain. At any cost, she must turn to see whether—

Yes, her fears were verified. Herculanus had caught one of the horses that crossed his path, thrown himself upon it, and was now pursuing the girl, who was using the last remnant of her strength to fly. She distinctly heard the heavy feet splash through the marshy pools of the meadow land; heard, alas! louder and louder, therefore nearer and nearer, the fierce shouts of the rider and the trampling of hoofs winged by his excitement. The space which separated them grew shorter and shorter very rapidly. Mortal terror overwhelmed Bissula; she remembered how the cruel Roman had tried to kill her in the forest hut like an animal slain for sacrifice.

In this approach of death one name, one only sprang to her lips. "Adalo!" she shrieked, "Adalo! Help, save me, save Bissula!"

Vain appeal! No human being was visible far or near. No answer came.

There was no fighting on the strip of shore

toward which she was running, only far out on the lake blazing Roman galleys were floating, pursued by the little boats of the Alemanni.

The terrible horse was already very near. She could hear the snorting of the animal as it was urged forward with blows of the heels, shaking of the bridle, and shouts, to more and more frantic speed. Then — oh, rescue! — she saw in the gray light of morning, close to the shore, hidden among the rushes, two boats of the Alemanni side by side. Those were certainly no Roman vessels: there was neither triangular sail nor lofty prow. Bissula even fancied that she distinguished on one the sixteen-branched antlers, Adalo's house-mark. Yes, yes, there it was; it was his fishing boat, and several men were bending to the oars. She called loudly several times: "Help, Alemanni, help for Bissula!"

Oh, joy! They had heard her voice. The men were rowing with all their might; both boats were flying toward the shore to meet her. And then, more joy: she heard behind her a loud cry and a dull, heavy fall with a splashing noise. She could not help looking back.

Yes, the horse, urged beyond its strength by

the pitiless rider, had fallen; it lay on its side, lashing out savagely with its hoofs. But alas! Bissula had rejoiced too soon. The rider had sprung up unhurt and was now running toward her — only a few steps away, brandishing his dagger. The second pursuer appeared from behind the horse. And the boat was still several ship's lengths out upon the lake. Without hesitation the girl leaped into the water, waded as long as she could touch the bottom, then with a strong push from the ground, spread out her powerful white arms, well practised in the art, and swam toward the nearest boat.

No girl on the northern shore excelled Bissula in swimming; but the long flowing folds of her robe hampered her, winding about her feet as soon as they were wet and preventing her from aiding the strokes of her arms with those of the lower limbs. And, horror! splashes behind her announced that her pursuer, or two of them, had followed her into the lake, for she thought she twice heard a plunge or a heavy fall. This fear paralyzed the last remnant of her strength; her arms also refused to obey her will; she sank with her face low in the water.

Once more she raised herself from it; then

she felt her pursuer seize her long robe and drag her toward the land; but at the same instant his grasp relaxed; a shrill death-cry fell upon her ear, followed by a low, angry growl. Turning her head, she saw Herculanus sinking in the arms of a huge blackish-brown beast.

"Bruna!" she called again; then her senses seemed to fail. There was a strange roaring in her ears; the water filled her nose, mouth, and ears, and she sank.

Just at that moment four strong arms seized her by the shoulders, and the white hands flung high out of the waves for the last time. With great, but tender strength she was lifted into the boat. Then she opened her eyes: Ausonius and Saturninus stood before her. She shrieked aloud in the anguish of the keenest disappointment; her eyelids closed, her senses failed, and faintness overwhelmed her.

CHAPTER LV.

EVEN the reënforcements of Saturninus's troops could not have changed the result of the battle around the ships and the camp on the lake-shore: the die had fallen long before, nay, almost at the moment the conflict began; for the surprise here had been almost more complete than in the assault upon the Idisenhang.

In spite of the chill of the September night, the brave Commander, Nannienus, had had his couch prepared on the high quarter-deck, above the second bank of oars of his bireme; a very simple bed, consisting of a woolen blanket spread over the planks, a coil of rope under his neck and his Breton cloak for a coverlet. In reply to the warning of the colonist from Arbor, who now relieved the helmsman, against the nocturnal coolness of the lake, he had said, smiling:

"Oh, how often I have crossed at night, no more warmly wrapped, between Britain and

Gaul! Is the German ocean to be shamed by this fresh water pond? There is no better sleeping potion than the rocking ship beneath me and the stars above! Unfortunately, to-night there is no moon and there are few stars. Strange, this constant calling of the swans. I never supposed there could be so many!"

While thinking of the swan notes, he fell asleep, but they haunted his dreams. He saw countless white, brown, and black swans coming from both sides of the marshy forest against his squadron, raising their wings threateningly as if to strike.

After a long sleep he awoke: gradually, as is natural after healthy slumber, not all at once, his thoughts began to clear. Was he still dreaming? It seemed as if the calling and singing of the swans on both sides actually came nearer, accompanied by a peculiar low whistling, humming, rippling, with now and then a louder splash in the water. Still half asleep he asked the man at the helm: "What is that humming among the rushes?"

"The swans, my lord, the wild swans," replied the helmsman, the old Roman colonist from Arbor. He was a retired member of the

Twenty-second Legion, faithful to the Cæsar. "I know it well! I have often seen them at sunset going by thousands to the marshy forests of this lake. They are preparing to migrate."

"No," cried the Breton starting up. "Those are no water birds, the splashing is too loud." Lifting the helmet from his head, he gazed out keenly.

"The night is black as pitch, but look, something is swimming out from the rushes yonder: Swans? No, no!" He tore his sword from its sheath.—"Those are boats! To arms! Raise the anchor! The foe!"

At the same moment a bright light flamed on the Idisenhang, red torches blazed in the camp on the shore; a bundle of burning straw flew over Nannienus's helmet into the half-reefed sail, remained there caught by the folds, while tongues of fire, fanned by the north wind, crept up the sail, the rigging, the mast. Already dark forms were climbing up the sides of the galley from all directions, and wild cries from men, attacked and mortally wounded while sleeping, rang from all the ships and the camp on the lake shore.

Nannienus sprang with flashing sword toward

the first man who boarded the galley. But the desperate fellow did not seem to care for his own life. Without heeding or attempting to parry the blow, which came within a hair's breadth of his unprotected head, he thrust a sort of harpoon (that is, a spear eight feet long with a sharp point and a hook curving backward, such as the men threw through holes in the ice on the lake in winter to catch the largest sheatfish) into the Roman's bronze belt, jerked him forward with tremendous force and hurled him overboard.

Nannienus fell into one of the boats of the Alemanni, at the starboard side of his bireme, and striking his head against a thwart, lay stunned for a considerable time. The skiff was empty, all its occupants had boarded the galley. When he regained consciousness, he saw his own ship and most of the other vessels in flames; while his camp on the shore, and even that of Saturninus, high up on the Idisenhang, were burning. Then he perceived that all was lost. Everywhere the remnant of his armada which had escaped the flames was in full flight, pursued by the Barbarians.

He resolved to make his escape to Arbor, and hastily unbuckled the Roman armor that would have betrayed him; his helmet he had lost in his fall. Then, seeing a German mantle lying among the rubbish in the boat, he threw it on, placed himself at the helm (these boats were rowed and steered standing), trimmed the coarse square sail to catch the wind, and was soon flying, unnoticed by the Germans, who recognized the boat as one of their own, across the lake toward Arbor.

Once only, the utmost peril threatened him. He had overtaken a lofty Roman ship whose sails were partly burned, but the fire was evidently being extinguished by the crew. He was on the point of hailing it and ordering the men to take him on board when, to his horror, he perceived that the galley was filled with Alemanni. As he had taken possession of the German boat, they were pursuing on the captured bireme other Roman ships that were flying to Arbor.

He hastily rowed the skiff away from the great vessel, and now perceived that in Arbor, too, a terrible conflagration was rising toward

heaven. It was the funeral pyre of Roman rule in the fortress on the lake. Nannienus saw it with terror, turned his boat west southwest, and tried to gain, instead of the lost Arbor, the distant but safe harbor citadel of Constantia.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE camp on tne lake shore had been taken, with great loss of life to the Romans.

A camp wall and ditch had been hurriedly made in the few hours after their arrival, merely for form's sake, because the good old Roman custom prescribed it, and Nannienus insisted upon its observance. But the Commander himself closed his eyes to the carelessness of the work. This camp was to be abandoned at dawn on the following morning and its men sent to garrison the one on the Idisenhang and to march in pursuit of the Barbarians. So the ditch was dug only a few feet deep, the wall erected only a few feet high, and other fortifications were omitted. The Alemanni instantly poured from all directions into the fortress, whose inmates were overcome by sleep and wine.

The old Duke had given them counsel taken from the songs of a wandering bard, who had sung in his own hall, to the music of his harp,

ancient tales of his race. The man was a Batavian and bore the names, an odd medley, Julius Claudius Civilis Chlodomer. He went from tribe to tribe as far as they understood his language, singing and telling the old songs and legends. So he related how, three centuries before, his people, skilled in the use of arms, and led by his ancestor who, though a German, had the same Roman names as his distant descendant, fought furiously against the Roman yoke and won many a victory, inspired by Veleda, a maiden prophetess of the Bructeri.

And he sang how once, one moonless, starless night, they attacked a Roman ship camp on the Rhine: the galleys were anchored in the river; on the shore were many tents. The Batavians first cut the main ropes, which wound around the poles stretching the tents; and the sleepers, buried, entangled, and held beneath them, were easily overpowered while thus defenceless:

> "Like plump fish captured
> In nets by night,
> They struggled, shouting
> Their tents beneath."

The old Duke had firmly impressed upon

his mind these lines of the Batavians; they had seemed to him the best of all, and he now used what he had learned.

The Romans were wakened first by the tents falling in upon them, by the glare of flames on all sides, and then by the Germans' shouts of victory. They scattered without offering the least resistance; saw the ships, their nearest refuge, also burning; tried to climb to the camp on the height, but beheld fire blazing there also, and fled, without aim or plan, to the right and left along the shore of the lake. They were pursued by few of the victors, who preferred, first of all, to seize the small Roman vessels and in these aid their comrades to board the proud biremes. These vessels would contain more men, and their higher decks were far better suited to climb the sides of the large war galleys than the low fishing boats of the Alemanni. So it happened that many German boats drifted to the shore empty, their crews having abandoned them to pursue in the smaller Roman vessels, the Roman galleys, or having already boarded them.

When Decius, with the little band of Illyrians, whom he had held together around the

wounded General and Ausonius, reached the burning camp, even Saturninus, with the biremes blazing before his eyes, recognized reluctantly that here, too, all was lost, and any continuation of the battle impossible. He consented, hesitatingly, to think only of flight. Rignomer, who had joined the General at the lake gate, was the first to discover, as he gazed watchfully to and fro, several deserted boats of the Alemanni drifting near them.

Leaping into the water, sometimes wading, sometimes swimming, he reached the first, climbed in, found the oars, rowed to the three skiffs nearest, tied them together with the ropes tangled near the steering oar, and soon brought his little fleet so close to the shore that the wounded Commander could be placed in the largest one, while the whole band of fugitives —five or six in each—entered the others. By his advice they all removed the high Roman helmets, which could be recognized at a long distance, and the glittering Roman armor. At his suggestion, too, they separated. Even Decius willingly followed the counsel of the Batavian, an expert in sailing, in order not to attract the enemy's attention so easily: thus

they hoped to reach Arbor, on the southern shore, singly and undetected.

When Hariowald and his followers arrived, they found nothing to do except to take possession of all the Roman and German vessels which still lay unused near the land, and continue the pursuit of the war galleys on the lake. Springing into a Roman transport boat, he ordered his men to row him to Nannienus's galley, where the boarders, after overpowering the crew, had extinguished the flames. A man standing on the lofty deck flung a rope ladder into the boat and gave Hariowald his hand to help him on board. It was now dawn; the Duke recognized Fiskulf, the fisherman.

"What!" cried the old Commander in astonishment. "Did Odin really save you? Then he is even more powerful and more gracious than I expected."

"It must be so," replied the man, with a happy laugh. "I was the first on deck, flung the first brand into the main sail, and swung the Italian lord overboard like a lake salmon out of an ice-hole. But then I saved the beautiful ship by putting out the flames. I thought:

'It is better to capture than to burn.' Did I keep my word?"

"You have surpassed it. And are you uninjured?"

"Not entirely: henceforth I shall have one ear less. It must be owned that the short swords of these Italians slice sharply, and they deal powerful blows. Look, not even the mother who bore me with two ears would believe that one ever peered out under my hair here — he shaved it off so smoothly."

The Duke held out his hand: "You shall be one of my followers, Fiskulf! You have learned to hear and to obey me."

"Yes, my lord, even with one ear! When I miss the second, I shall always tell myself why I lost it."

"And how the Lofty One gave you back the life forfeited to him: never forget that. But now we will pursue the Italians across the lake to Arbor on their own splendid galley. Spread every sail!"

"Where shall we get them, my lord? They are all burned."

"Then stretch your mantles for sails. The north wind will help to fill them; a fresh west

northwest breeze will spring up at sunrise. See how the waves are rippling already. The first red ray of morning is breaking through yonder clouds. Quick, men, seize the Roman oars; the morning sun must greet us on the southern shore. Ha, do you behold it over yonder? Smoke and flames are rising in Arbor. Our eastern men, the Hermunduri, and our kinsmen, now free, though hitherto under the foreign yoke, have kept their promise. Up! On to Arbor to celebrate the third victory of one night!"

He seized the helm himself. The proud galley of the Romans turned her prow away from the northern shore, and being now rowed by the conquerors, moved majestically across the lake. The mantles of the Alemanni, brown, blue, yellow, and red, filled in the fresh northwestern breeze, and the well-built ship darted swiftly through the water, which reflected the clear sky in the increasing brightness of the morning and shone with a wonderful azure hue. The waves broke in foam before the bow, tossing their white spray high into the air; little rosy clouds were floating in the eastern sky and were mirrored in the lake.

With the folds of his dark mantle around him, his white locks fluttering, his head crowned with a shining white helmet, Hariowald's tall figure stood forth in strong relief against the sky, as he remained at the helm erect and motionless, his spear flung over his shoulder. So the ship and her helmsman gradually vanished beyond the sight of the eyes watching them intently from the northern shore.

Rignomer, peering from behind his sail, also saw and recognized him. "They can upbraid me as much as they please," he muttered. "Where is Brinno, who tried to oppose him? They can say what they choose. Even though in human form, it is still *he!*"

CHAPTER LVII.

BUT the Batavian was suddenly startled from his mythological studies. He heard from the east a shout in German: "Romans! Romans! On them!" and saw a boat filled with Alemanni steer toward them.

"Quick! Disperse in every direction!" he called, and the boats containing the fugitives scattered. He soon lost sight of two, which attracted the attention of the pursuers and were driven by the Germans out upon the lake toward the south. He himself steered and rowed at the same time, assisted by several soldiers, close in to the shore westward, where by good fortune he reached a small patch of rushes, among which he hid the boat; the second one, containing Decius, soon joined him.

From this place Ausonius, who by Saturninus's order was watching the shore to see if they could rescue any fugitive Romans, perceived by the dim light of morning the figure of a girl in a gleaming white robe, who was

running at her utmost speed straight toward the boats. He already thought he recognized Bissula when her cry fell upon his ear: "Adalo, Alemanni, help Bissula!" He also saw a horseman dashing in furious pursuit down the hill. He ordered the men to row quickly shoreward. Prosper, even Rignomer, hesitated.

"My lord," the latter warned him, "they will murder us all!"

"No matter! Bissula! It is for Bissula!"

Then Rignomer instantly obeyed. Hidden behind his sail he had not seen the young girl, and could not hear her; but now he turned the helm, and sent the boat with the speed of lightning toward the shore, at the same time urging the soldiers to row with all their might. The rest of the men now recognized the fugitive, and so the rescuers came just in time to save her from sinking.

Bissula, whose strength was completely exhausted, lay unconscious in the bottom of the boat for a long, long time. Rignomer had rolled into a bundle a fishing net which he found in the bow and put it under her head for a pillow. Ausonius, sitting on a thwart, supported her lovely little head and gazed anx-

iously down into her face, while the Batavian rubbed her cold hands.

Meanwhile the two boats left their hiding-place among the rushes, rowed first directly southward out upon the lake, and then by making a wide circuit to avoid pursuit, intended to turn toward Arbor. But they did not go far.

"What have you determined, General?" asked Decius, calling from the second boat as they rowed side by side.

"To take vengeance," replied Saturninus savagely; "vengeance for this unprecedented disgrace. As soon as I reach Arbor, I shall beseech the Cæsar, if ever Saturninus deserved favor from the Empire, to give me three legions. The Barbarians shall be repaid this very night."

"Stay," cried Rignomer. "I have long seen a Roman galley coming toward us."

"Where? Whence?" asked Decius. "It probably contains Barbarians."

"No, no! It is coming from the southwest. Look yonder — from Constantia!"

"Yes," exclaimed Decius. "That is the Emperor's swiftest ship; I recognize it. It bears the great purple flag, so the Emperor himself is on board."

"Or a Magister Militum sent by the Cæsar," remarked Saturninus.

The two boats remained motionless; the swift galley swept forward. It must at first have been supposed that the boats were filled with Barbarians, but the crew soon discovered that the men were Romans; and now the ship reached them. On her deck, beside a richly armed officer, stood Nannienus. "O my friend," cried Saturninus, raising his head, "that we should meet again thus! And you, Andragathes, what do you bring? I hope help, reënforcements. We are defeated: army and ships are lost." He groaned aloud.

"I know it, my Saturninus," replied the imperial envoy. "Nannienus, whom I took on board, here on the lake, flying in a Barbarian boat, has told me all that he had himself experienced and what he feared for you. Alas! What is this little defeat? What are these two or three thousand men, compared to the terrible blow which has fallen upon us?"

"What has happened?" asked the Roman leader, startled.

"A second Cannæ, Gratianus says."

"Oh, what a dreadful word is that!"

"The Emperor Valens and his whole army are defeated, put to rout by the Goths at Adrianople. Forty thousand Romans lie dead upon their shields, thirty thousand are prisoners. The Emperor Valens while wounded was burned during his flight, in a peasant's house. All the Eastern Provinces are overrun by the Goths; even Constantinople is threatened. Gratianus has appointed you, Saturninus, commander-in-chief of the whole trembling, orphaned Eastern Empire. He commands you to hasten at once to Vindonissa, to lead his whole army thence against the Goths on the Danube. You are his last hope, and the Empire's. 'Saturninus alone can still save us,' he ordered me to tell you."

"And this Saturninus is a bungler," groaned the Illyrian, "and a wounded man, too. Attacked and disgracefully defeated by Suabian robbers — beaten in every sense!" He laughed grimly.

"Ha!" replied Nannienus mournfully, "that is nothing compared to my fate. An imperial fleet, under my command, captured and burned by miserable fishing boats."

"Alas," Saturninus continued, "and now I cannot even avenge myself and my honor as a

General on these miscreants. But the Empire —the Emperor's command overrules everything else. I obey. Turn the helm. We will go to Constantia, thence to Vindonissa. Come with me at once, Ausonius. Do you not hear?"

"Directly," replied the latter. "She is opening her eyes."

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE imperial galley was preparing to tow Saturninus's boat. This plan seemed best for the wounded General, who could not easily be lifted upon the lofty deck of the ship. Engaged in this task, the other Romans did not notice the young girl, who now sat up. Her first glance rested on the Prefect. "Ausonius!" she said feebly. "Again captured by you."

"Saved by me—by us Romans," he answered, more sternly than he was accustomed to speak, especially to her.

Strange changes had taken place in the character of the variable man. He was not yet absolutely sure of his own feelings — how everything ought to end between him and Bissula.

"True, you did not call my name or appeal to us for aid. You had another deliverer in your mind. Yet you were not saved by the Alemanni, but by us Romans."

"From your own nephew, he alone pursued me!" she answered vehemently.

"Punishment has overtaken him," replied the Prefect, shuddering. "Let these thoughts pass. I saved you; I first recognized you and ordered the boat to turn back, merely to rescue you. Thus I risked life and liberty, for your wolfish people are certainly wild beasts and murderers. So: life for life. There we are equal. But," he went on gravely, earnestly, and kindly, yet with a stern, strange tone, as if testing her, "but we have not yet done with each other, little maid. You wounded me deeply, very deeply by your fierce, rude, childish refusal. Almost as deeply as the poisoning plan of— the dead man. The terrible events of the past night first taught me how I love you: I thought constantly of you, your fate, your safety. Duty called me, but I sent you my most faithful ——"

"To prevent my escape!"

"To protect you, ungrateful girl. When I fell from the wagon under the missiles of the Barbarians and thought death would come the next moment, even then I thought only of you. I have proved it by the most terrible test; my

love for you is genuine, no mere caprice; it will end only with my life. And so once more, not as a reward for your act of rescue (I have repaid that), not as a favor or a gift — if the word offended you — once more, for the last time in life (and consider well, I will never set you free again) I ask you: will you be my servant, or my wife? I beseech you — do you hear? I, Ausonius, beseech you: become my wife!"

"Never! Never!" cried the girl starting up.

"Insolent!" replied the rejected lover, offended and deeply incensed: "You forget you are again my captive — again in my power."

A glance from Bissula into the waves of the lake, here very deep, was her only reply. Ausonius continued, without understanding the meaning of the look, "Now I know the cause of this defiant, senseless refusal. You deceived me when you said you had no lover."

"I have no one who loves me," she answered with the deepest sadness; tears filled her eyes as she gazed fixedly into vacancy.

"You lie!" cried Ausonius. "That Adalo!" Bissula started. "He must love you madly."

Bissula listened intently, gazing at him in

astonishment; glowing shame and happy terror filled her heart.

But the Roman went on: "Or would he, a free Prince of the Alemanni, have solemnly made the proposal to Saturninus and me: 'Let the maiden go unhurt. Adalo will take her place as captive.' Do you know what that means? A slave for life?"

"He — he did that? For me?" Passionate delight flashed from her eyes, her soul.

Ausonius gazed silently into her face. Then he said: "How he loves you, this offer shows: how you love him, your radiant eyes betray. But," he added, slowly and searchingly, "know this. He will no longer separate us. You can become mine without breaking faith with him, for —" he clasped her hand.

"What is it? What has happened to him? Speak!"

"He is dead."

"Oh!" shrieked Bissula, and, before Ausonius could stop her, she had wrenched herself from his hold, sprung on the thwart of the boat and, clasping her hands above her head with a gesture of silent anguish, flung herself forward toward the water.

A strong arm caught her; it was Rignomer's.

"Stay, hot-hearted child!" he exclaimed kindly. But the girl struggled furiously in his grasp, she was resolved to plunge into the deep lake; the light boat rocked dangerously.

"Calm yourself," said Ausonius gravely and sorrowfully. "He lives."

"Oh, how cruelly you have played with me," cried the girl. The Batavian now drew her gently down upon the thwart, and she burst into a flood of tears; but they were tears of joy.

"It was no play, only a test. I see with grief that you really love the fair-haired boy so fondly. If he had fallen, you would rather have followed him to death than lived as my wife in splendor and happiness? O Bissula, this is hard!"

"Father! Dear Father! Don't be angry. I cannot help it. But is it certain? Does he live?"

"Yes. You cannot help it! That is true; I see it now. Be comforted. He is alive. I saw him carried off the field by his followers. Saturninus and he exchanged blows."

"Yes. Be calm, little one," the Tribune interposed good humoredly. "His stroke was

really no harder than mine. I am still alive, so he will doubtless live too."

"Oh, Ausonius!" pleaded Bissula, raising both hands beseechingly. But he did not let her finish the sentence. Passing his hand across his eyes he murmured unheard by the others: "It is over. This hour has made me an old man." Then he asked: "Where do you wish to be put on shore? Opposite to Suomar's forest hut?"

"Thank you, my warmest thanks! But not there, farther to the left from here; yonder under the willows, where a nobleman's hall stands on the height."

"His!" exclaimed Ausonius.

"Which you saved for him," added Saturninus. "All very beautiful and noble — almost touching!" the Tribune continued, trying to seem unmoved, yet at the same time kindly stroking the hand of the young girl, in whose eyes the dancing light of joy mingled with tears like May rain. "Only I will not permit the Prefect Prætor of Gaul to return to that shore full of murderous wolves. No, indeed I will not. Neither will I risk the life of any Roman soldier. Who is to take her to the land?"

"I will go myself alone!" cried the eager girl.

"That some Roman murderous wolf may follow you again on your way to the hall; they are still worse!" cried the voice of some one, in German. "No, illustrious Tribune," it continued in Latin, "I will take the child to her friends."

Rignomer now stepped from behind the sail which had concealed him. His appearance was totally transformed: he had removed the Roman helmet long before; now he had unbuckled the coat of mail and thrown around him a brown Alemannic mantle which he had found in the boat. Instead of the Roman weapons he carried over his shoulder a long iron-shod pole, used for pushing and guiding boats while it could touch the bottom.

"You?" asked Saturninus. "You too will be a dead man if they catch you — a warrior in the Roman service."

"Pardon me; I am one no longer. My time of service expired at midnight — the last of the long seven years: what I did since —"

"It was ——" replied Saturninus.

"Was done voluntarily. I shall not renew my oath of service. No, no! I have had enough —

more than enough of it. The Emperor still owes my pay for the last month. I will let it go. I shall return to my mother, on the Issala. But first I will take this runaway child to her people."

As he spoke he grasped her hand. "Jump over, little one. See, the other boat is empty: they have all climbed up into the galley. Jump over! Happily, we are going home!"

"So be it!" said Ausonius, without resentment but gravely: "Farewell, Bissula! We part never to meet again."

He turned away. Bissula threw herself on his breast and, amid flowing tears, kissed his noble brow. His face had never been so handsome. "Ausonius, farewell!"

She sprang into the second boat, where Rignomer was already standing; then she turned again toward the other one. This had been fastened by a rope to the galley and now began to follow it as, propelled by many oars, it swept toward the southwest.

"Father Ausonius, I thank you!" she called. But he did not hear. With his face averted from his young friend, and his gray head pressed against the mast, he was weeping bitterly.

The ship, dragging the boat in its wake, flew swiftly away.

. . . . .

The Batavian wielded the oars sturdily, and the light boat rapidly approached the shore.

Bissula no longer watched the disappearing Roman galley, but with a throbbing heart sprang into the bow of the boat, where Adalo's house-mark, the sixteen-branched antlers, rose proudly; she could not help stroking it tenderly. The next instant she turned, laughing and clapping her hands joyously, and exclaimed: "Now, Rignomer, you shall see for once what rowing means. We are moving far too slowly for me!"

Lifting two oars from the bottom of the light boat she put them skilfully into the willow holders, seized them with both hands and, standing erect, her face turned toward the shore, rowed with such strength and skill that Rignomer exclaimed in wonder: "By Freya's eyes, girl, you might become a boatman on the Issala any day! You can do this too? A pity that you are not going with me to my mother!" The boat shot to the land among the marshes. Bissula reached the ground with a long leap

before the Batavian could help her. The steersman had kept a straight course for the nobleman's hall: they saw the stately wooden mansion towering directly above them on the hill.

"Oh, Donar be thanked," cried the girl joyously. "He has saved his favorite beast, as the she-bear saved me."

"What? What are you looking at in the mire?"

"See! Bear tracks; very fresh ones! She was not drowned; she ran yonder to the right along the shore on the old path where Sippilo and I always went to fish."

"Who is Sippilo?" asked the Batavian. "Another Adalo?"

"Oh, nonsense! A child. And just see; from here the tracks go directly to the hall. Come! Don't walk! Leap! Spring up the hill!"

"No, little one," said the Batavian gravely. "You can run; I will not go with you. You seem to know the way, to know it very well. There is no human being in sight far or near. You can reach the hall safe without me. Aha, there too, a huge stag's antlers tower from the roof. That is the reason you were so pleased

with the one on the boat's prow. Farewell, little one! I won't go to the meeting — I mean yours with Adalo and all the rest who belong to his clan."

"They would thank you for having done so much for me."

"Never mind the thanks. I did not do it for them."

"Where are you going?"

"Home. To the north and west. No, have no fear for me; I shall make my way through. Here in my breast, little one, I carry the pay and the price of the booty won in seven years; and on my shoulder is this pole. One can go far with these two assistants. Farewell! And," — he whispered in her ear — "heed my words: never defy the man you call your Duke; for he is — *he!*"

He patted her hair and her pretty round head with rough tenderness as he spoke, and then sprang toward the west along the lake shore. Once he stopped to look after her — he wanted to wave another farewell. But Bissula did not see him. She was running, with glowing cheeks, up the hill.

CHAPTER LIX.

IT was now broad daylight. The sun was shining radiantly on the mountain and the lake. Light clouds which hitherto had hung like a veil thrown over a long spear about the peak of Sentis floated swiftly down into the valley. During the night a light snow had fallen upon Sentis and Tödi and the other topmost peaks in the chain, and lay there glittering like sparkling crystal. It was very peaceful. The war — thanks to Bissula — had not brought its destruction here. Hoar frost flashed on every blade of grass.

The child of the forest, so long shut out from lake, meadow, and field, rejoiced in the freedom of nature. She inhaled long draughts of the pure air; nay, in spite of her impatience, she even turned once and, standing still, gazed out over the shining azure lake and the peaks of the mountains radiant in white and gold.

"I do not know how to call you all by name, ye beloved gods, who have guided everything

so happily for me, aided me upon land and water, and are now shining in the sunlight and the glory of the mountains! And Adalo lives: that is the best, the very best of all that ye have done. Ye gods, I do not know you all, but I thank every one of you!"

She stretched her arms toward the sun. Then, that the goddess of the lake and Donar, the King of the mountains, whose throne was on Sentis, might not be angry, she saluted the water and the mountains, with both hands, raising and lowering them as one waves a greeting to a friend recognized at a distance. Again she ran impatiently up the hill side. Most of the singing birds had left the lake long before; but one little robin which always remained there all winter recognized the friendly being who often scattered food for it on the snow, and, greeting her with a light chirping, flew a few paces in front of her until she reached the door of the hall

. . . . .

Within the great central room Adalo lay on the floor upon a pile of soft skins, his head toward the steps of the master's lofty seat, his feet toward the entrance. His head rested in

the lap of gray-haired Waldrun; his eyes were closed. At his left lay Zercho, but placed in the opposite direction, with his head toward the door and a huge goblet of mead beside him. At his right stood Sippilo, gazing down anxiously at his brother's face. Beside the wounded man was Bruna, the she-bear, growling softly as she licked his hand. She was the first to move, raising her head as light footsteps were heard on the sand outside the door.

The blind woman said, in a low tone that the wounded man might not hear: "That is Bissula's tread."

The girl appeared in the doorway. Sippilo started, Zercho raised his head, but she motioned to them all to keep silence, and noiselessly advancing with bare feet to Adalo's couch, she laid her little hand on his head.

"Bissula?" asked the Adeling.

She bent over him, her red locks falling on his pale face.

"Is it you, little one? No, no! The fairest of the Valkyrias has come to bear me upward —do you see her swan wings?—up to Valhalla's shining heights." Bissula's white robe was floating around her shoulders.

The girl cast a glance of agonized terror at Waldrun.

"Be comforted," said the old dame firmly, "he will live. And everything will be as I have said."

"You must stay with us always now," cried Sippilo, seizing her garments as if to hold her by force.

Bruna, growling joyfully, had risen and put one paw on her knee, looking up at her with intelligent eyes. Bissula gratefully patted the animal's head and held out her hand to Zercho, who kissed it humbly. Laughing, yet with tears in his eyes, he cried: "O little sprite, little red sprite!"

But now the girl bent down again, exclaiming:

"No, Adalo, it is no Valkyria, it is Bissula, little red Bissula, who is so wicked, so wicked! Adalo, — hush, don't speak, — I know all. I know, too, what you wanted to do for me, what you offered. That was wrong in you. Hush, hush! It was certainly what you — you only — are of all the people in the world. Hush, dearest — don't move. Yes, yes, I will stay here, your nurse, your maid-servant, as long as you

need me. Ah! I beg you so earnestly—I entreat you—take me! No, no! Do not move your arm! Not yet to your breast! But I will do everything all my life—will be as blindly obedient as you desire: only let me stay with you—your own!"

Her little head sank on his breast. The wounded man raised himself, kissed her flowing red hair, the red lips, now smiling again, and the eyes still wet with tears, exclaiming rapturously:

"O Bissula—you dear one—you wicked elf—my beloved bride!"

THE END.

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Dahn, Felix
A captive of the Roman eagles.

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AUTHOR

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